

'Hebron Jews' demand evacuation of settlers

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jews who trace their roots in Hebron for centuries are calling for an immediate evacuation of Jewish settlers from the West Bank town saying the settlers have the right to be there even in the name of Jewish ancestry.

An appeal appearing in Internet this week signed by 34 people representing most of the ancient Jewish families living in Hebron described the settlers as "alien to the culture and way of life of the Hebron Jews."

The statement underlined the fundamental rift in the Israeli society, particularly between the Jews who have been living in Palestine along with Palestinians for centuries before the State of Israel was created in 1948 and immigrants, who, more often than not, were enticed into living in the occupied West Bank by government incentives since 1967.

The appeal by "the Hebron Jews" was carried under the Internet address of Peace Now, an Israeli group that supports the Palestinian people's right to set an independent state and rejects Israel's settlement policy in the occupied territories.

The statement, whose signatories included many of the prominent Jewish families in Hebron such as Zarfat, Slonim, Hassun, Schenitson, Mani, and Kliars, demanded that the Israeli government "evacuate the handful of settlers from the city at once before they succeed in exploding the peace process and destroying the prospects of peace."

Security for the 450 Jewish settlers living in the heart of Hebron among the town's 120,000 Palestinians has been one of the key hurdles cited by the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in its demand for changing some of the agreement that the Palestinians

had signed with the previous Labour government.

The changes, which are now accepted by the Palestinians, severely curtail the Palestinians' freedom to move around in Hebron and allows Israel to exercise indirect security control over the town.

Entitled "See Peace for Hebron," the Internet message said:

"We, the descendants of the families of Hebron's ancient Jewish community, sons and grandsons and great-grandsons of the Jews who lived in the city for hundreds of years, want peace."

"Now, when the city of our fathers and forefathers is in the eye of a storm threatening to explode the political process and to destroy the prospects of peace, we feel an obligation to say what is in our hearts."

"Settlers living in Hebron's heart do not have the right to speak in the name of the old Jewish community, and their pretensions to be following the path of our fathers are a deceit and deceiving. They are alien to the culture and way of life of the Hebron Jews, who, in the course of generations, created a heritage of peace between peoples and understanding between faiths."

"The settlers, who have taken possession of Jewish property in the heart of Hebron and made it theirs, have done thievish work. No one granted them the right that is not theirs, no matter if we speak of private property or community property. And they intend to add sins to their crimes and to possess other lands and structures."

"Therefore the government must evacuate the handful of settlers from the city at once, before they succeed in exploding the peace process and destroying the prospects of peace."

Those who wanted support the Hebron Jews' position were advised to write to Post Box 29828, Tel Aviv 61297 marked "For Hebron."

Russian Jew admits spying for KGB

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An electrical engineer who immigrated to Israel from the former Soviet Union in 1981 has admitted to spying for Moscow, court sources said Monday. Anatoly Gendler, 48, was a deputy manager of the state electricity authority and was accused of providing Soviet and then Russian intelligence with information on Israel's electrical generating and distribution systems and its military installations.

Appearing in court on Sunday, Gendler admitted spying for the former KGB Soviet intelligence service but said he stopped five years ago, the sources said. Gendler said he had been linked to the KGB since 1970 and had been blackmailed into continuing his work for the spy agency after emigrating from Moldova since his parents remained in Russia as virtual hostages, the sources said.

The exact date of Gendler's arrest was not revealed. His identity had been kept secret until Sunday's court appearance.

Princess Basma visits Ajloun, Jerash

AJLOUN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma on Monday visited Ajloun and Jerash governorates in the course of the Ramadan charity campaign carried out by the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF). The Princess told local residents that the campaign aims at fostering solidarity and cooperation among the one Jordanian family and to help the poor through providing them with their needs in this holy month.

The residents expressed gratitude to Princess Basma and her efforts to help the needy. Four hundred needy families benefited from the campaign in the two



Her Royal Highness Princess Basma visits a local family during a tour she made of Ajloun and Jerash governorates as part of a Ramadan charity campaign organized by the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (Petra photo)

governorates. The Princess also met with women representa-

tives in the two governorates and listened to their demands in increasing women's participation in their local communities.

Eitan rejects talk of abandoning Jordan Valley settlements

The Jerusalem Post

AGRICULTURE MINISTER Rafael Eitan on Sunday attacked a recent coalition-opposition understanding regarding the Jordan Valley as contravening government policy and said it should be ignored.

Speaking on a visit to the valley, Eitan said the understandings reached between coalition chairman Michael Eitan and Labour Deputy Yossi Beilin "do not coincide with government policy, and if anyone is conducting such talks you should not pay him any attention," Eitan told farmers and settlement leaders that he is "committed to developing the region and that his ministry would give priority to research and development, land cultivation, and bringing new settlers to live there."

The minister made his comments while addressing the dedication ceremony of the Ya'acobi experimental farm, named in memory of researcher Zvi Ya'acobi. His remarks followed a discussion of the Michael Eitan-Yossi Beilin understandings in Friday's cabinet meeting. Eitan told the audience that the cabinet had expressed clear reservations regarding the understandings. He insisted the importance of the Jordan Valley had not diminished in the eyes of the government.

Last Thursday, the Jordan Valley settlements were in an uproar over reports that the understandings made no mention of their remaining under Israeli sovereignty in a final settlement with the Palestinians.

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British nurses in good health in Saudi prison

DUBAI (R) — Two British nurses charged with murdering an Australian colleague in Saudi Arabia appeared in good health but were finding life at the women's section of a Dammam prison difficult, a relative said on Monday.

The two Britons, Lucille McLaughlan, 31, and Deborah Parry, 41, were imprisoned in the eastern Saudi city of Dammam on Dec. 20 and charged with murdering Yvonne Gilford, 55.

Under Islamic law, the two could face public beheading if found guilty of premeditated murder by a panel of three judges. Defendants have the right of appeal to two other five-judge panels before a final verdict is passed.

The two women saw their relatives on Sunday for the first time in what Jonathan Ashby, Ms. Parry's brother-in-law, said was an emotional reunion in two separate rooms for "the good part of two hours."

He said Ms. Parry was wearing a long black robe, which women in the kingdom must wear, but her head was not covered, as custom dictates. She was not handcuffed.

"She appeared to be well," he told Reuters by telephone from Dammam. He was accompanied by Ms. Parry's uncle Terry Knight.

"She is finding it difficult, which is obvious. She did not ask for anything, but said they (the two women) were finding it difficult," he added.

He said a Saudi policeman was "present for some of the time" and that the two women appeared to be held in the same cell.

Ms. McLaughlan's parents were not available for com-

ment on Monday, but her father, Stan, was quoted in the Saudi paper Arab News as saying conditions in the jail were "okay" and that the visit was to "see Lucy, reassure, comfort and stand by her."

The relatives said they were sure the two were innocent.

Mr. Ashby said the relatives did not know if or when they would see the two women again nor how long they would stay in the kingdom. "We are taking it day by day."

A British Foreign Office spokesman said on Sunday a lawyer representing the two, Michael Dark, and the British consul, Lawson Ross, were also at the prison on Sunday. Mr. Ross delivered personal articles for the nurses.

He said the relatives hoped to see the nurses on Tuesday. Mr. Ashby said the relatives and the two nurses were still struggling to understand the law applied in the kingdom. "We don't fully understand the legal system here...The lawyers are explaining things to us."

In the event of guilty verdicts, Gilford's family could spare the lives of the two and ask for financial recompense known as blood money instead of the death sentence.

Gilford's family in Australia have ruled out a clemency appeal for the two.

Legal experts said that if found guilty of manslaughter the two would not be condemned to death.

Gilford was stabbed four times, battered with a hammer and smothered in her dormitory at the King Fahd military medical complex in the eastern oil city of Dhahran on Dec. 11.

Sudan mobilises forces after border attack

CAIRO (Agencies) — Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir on Monday called for a mobilisation of the army and civilian militia after rebel forces attacked towns on the Sudan-Ethiopia border.

Egypt's Middle East News Agency (MENA) said a statement issued by the palace early in the morning said the forces must "defend...the homeland and deter the enemies of Islam and humanity."

The statement used the phrase "jihad," which means holy war.

The mobilisation came after rebels of John Garang's Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) on Sunday attacked the Sudanese towns of Karmuk and Qasan near the Ethiopian border, apparently wresting control from the Sudanese army.

The two towns are about 350 kilometres southeast of the Sudanese capital Khartoum.

A statement issued early Monday by the Sudanese armed forces' general command accused Ethiopia of fighting with the Sudanese opposition, MENA said.

It said the fighting for the towns Sunday involved "different kinds of artillery" fired from inside Ethiopian territory and last-

ed for six hours, died down then resumed for another four hours.

An SPLA statement said that combined rebel forces captured several military positions in the Blue Nile region.

"A new front has been opened in the Blue Nile region, attacking and capturing the military positions of Yambra, Bakura, Yabsher which are located southeast of the town of Ar Rosier and Darnazin," the statement said.

"A large number of weapons and ammunition were seized," it said.

Earlier on Sunday an SPLA spokesman in Asmara said key towns including Karmuk were seized in heavy fighting the same day and that SPLA forces were advancing on the electricity station in Oessasin.

Spokesman Yassin Sahid Armar said that combined forces had taken the towns of Yakura, Agutera and Mansa in the north of the Blue Nile region, wiping out four government brigades.

"These are decisive battles for peace and democracy in Sudan," Mr. Armar said.

There were no immediate reports of casualties from the remote region.

MENA said state-run Sudan Television interrupted its regular programme to broadcast the statement from the military and accompanied it with patriotic songs.

The Sudanese rebels apparently managed to occupy a large swath around the border towns in Blue Nile state, MENA said.

Sudan has an active military force of about 89,000 and paramilitary units known as the Popular Defence Force of about 15,000 men. The militia's reserve is about 60,000 strong.

The SPLA has been fighting since 1983 to try to win autonomy for the south's Christians and animists from the Islamic north. More than 1.3 million people have died in the fighting and resulting famines.

General Bashir, who took power in a military coup in 1989, has vowed to end the uprising. He has made inroads into Col. Garang's following by offering peace agreements to some of Col. Garang's commanders and promising to enact a new constitution that would give the southerners exemptions from Islamic law.

Sudan has increasingly

accused neighbouring countries of intervening on behalf of the rebels in Sudan.

Relations between Sudan and Ethiopia have soured since Ethiopia and Egypt accused Sudan of involvement in an attempt on the life of Ethiopian President Hosni Mubarak in June 1995 in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa. Sudan has denied it.

Late last month, Sudan accused rebel fighters in Eritrea of shooting down a Sudanese military helicopter as it patrolled the border, killing all three soldiers aboard. Sudan said Eritrean forces were involved, too.

Eritrea broke off relations with Sudan in December 1994, accusing its neighbour of sheltering Islamic rebels.

In addition to accusing Eritrea of helping rebel forces, Sudan also has been critical of its neighbour for allowing anti-government political groups to operate from the capital, Asmara. These include the National Democratic Alliance, a grouping of Sudanese opposition parties that has vowed to overthrow Sudan's Islamic government.

National census puts Iranian population at nearly 60 million

TEHRAN (R) — Iran's population has reached 59.5 million, with the largest Tehran province accounting for 11 million people, according to a national census by the Iran Statistics Centre (ISC). "According to the preliminary results, Iran's urban population is 61 per cent versus the rural population during the current (Iranian

calendar year ending March 21, 1996," Abbasali Zali, ISC head was reported as saying by the English-language Iran News newspaper on Monday. Independent population estimates of the region's most populous country have ranged between 60 and 68 million. The ISC census was carried out in the last months of 1996, Iran News reported.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

13:05 Min Alhadi Al-Mohammadi
13:30 Cartoon (Captain Planet)
14:00 French Programme — Sciences Cartoon
14:30 Dog House
15:00 Feature Film
16:50 Call for Prayer and Iftar
17:30 You Bet Your Life
18:00 Serie — La Lumiere Des Jouvies
18:15 Magazine — Extra Large
19:30 News Headlines
20:02 Oriental Rugs
20:30 Encounter
21:10 Lost Civilisations (Documentary)
22:00 News in English
22:25 Islam in a Changing World (Documentary)
23:00 Snowy River
23:50 Mini Series — The River Kings
01:05 Ramadan Talks

PRAYER TIMES

05:11 Fajr
06:32 (Sunrise) Duha
11:45 Dhuhur
14:33 Asr
16:57 Maghreb
18:18 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740

Assemblies of God Church

Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440.

De la Salle Church

Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
623366

Anglican Church

Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church
Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church

Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel.
771751.

Armenian International Church

Tel. 652526
Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical

Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
654932.

Church of Nazareth

Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking

Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the
Department of Meteorology
Under the effect of a depression

USEFUL

TELEPHONE
NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Wisam Hayyan 748563
Dr. Adul Hadi Tayyan 620115
Dr. Munther Al Qadiri 779959
Dr. Mukhlis Mazahreh 820425
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Al Saham pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281484
Al Quds pharmacy (—)

affecting the Kingdom, rainfall

is expected in all parts of the Kingdom with temperatures dropping slightly and winds southwesterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman 19, Aqaba 29 Humidity readings: Amman 40 per cent, Aqaba 27 per cent.

YERADAY'S HIGH TEMPERATURES:

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ZARQA:

Dr. Salah Safarini 987565
Khalifah pharmacy 985417
EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre

637111
Civil Defence Dept 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381

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Jordan Television 77



IFTAR: Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath Al Hassan Monday exchanges a smile with Her Majesty Queen Noor at Basman Palace for members of the Royal family, Muslim spouses of the diplomatic corps, the Royal Court and government officials (Petra photo)

Freed Jordanians express gratitude for release, say other prisoners are ready to stage hunger strike

AMMAN (J.T.) — Three Jordanians released from Israeli jails Sunday arrived in Jordan yesterday via the King Hussein Bridge and voiced appreciation for His Majesty King Hussein's efforts as well as those of the Jordanian government which secured their release. Their relatives also stated their gratitude.

The release of the Salah Shagrin, Maher Battat and Bassam Kamal brings the number of Jordanians in Israeli jails to 18 and in a statement upon arrival the freed prisoners described to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, their hope that Jordan will pursue efforts to secure freedom for the remaining prisoners.

They told Petra that others still imprisoned intend to stage an open hunger strike to express their support for the peace process and prevent its demise.

An Embassy of Jordan official in Tel Aviv, Ramez Qousus, accompanied the men and released a statement at the bridge stating that the release came as a fruit of the Jordanian government's efforts in cooperation with the embassy under the directives of King Hussein.

"We will continue securing the release of other Jordanian detainees through contacts with the Israeli authorities," Mr. Qousus added.

Since the signing of the 1994 Jordan-Israel peace treaty, Israel has freed 20 Jordanian prisoners.

Minister of Information Marwan Muasher said in November that the release of 18 other Jordanians remaining in Israeli jails is a lengthy process as all of them have been convicted of killing Israeli civilians or soldiers.

The Israeli military has the final say in releasing prisoners convicted of murder.

Government reiterates warning against illicit telecommunications services

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The government on Monday reiterated a warning to private sector companies offering telecommunications services in Jordan without permission and stated that security forces had already closed down several firms and referred them to court.

Minister of Post and Telecommunications Jamal Sarairoh also outlined the projects and services planned by the commercial successor of the state-owned Telecommunications Corporation (TCC).

The minister said that authorities are poised to issue new licences to private sector companies in order to operate paging services as well as public pay-phones.

A new cellular phone company will also be given clearance this year to begin work on setting up infrastructure prior to starting operations in 1999, Mr. Sarairoh said.

The minister also announced that the JTC would offer further reductions in rates for international and local calls provided that revenues in the first three months of the year meet targets.

Mr. Sarairoh called on local magazines to refrain from carrying advertisements of sex chats over international telephone lines and offered to compensate the publications for the loss of revenue from such ads.

"Many homes have been destroyed because the high bills, incurred by family members calling overseas for the so-called friendship service," Mr. Sarairoh told a weekly news briefing.

"I strongly appeal to magazines, particularly weekly tabloids, not to accept such advertisements," said the minister. "If need be," he added, "I am willing to compensate them" for the loss of revenue.

According to official sources, hundreds of subscribers regularly approach the Jordan Telecommunications Company (JTC) complaining that their bills include charges for calls they did not make.

But, most of the time, a scrutiny of the bills reveal that the calls are indeed made by some member of the family and the destination numbers belong to so-called "sex-chat" service companies, according to sources.

Mr. Sarairoh also warned that private companies which offer international telephone calls at charges lower than those of the JTC were "unauthorised and illegal."

Several companies surfaced in Amman in recent months offering rates less than half of JTC rates. They also offer line-switching services — meaning that one could sit at home and make an international call through these companies and still pay lower rates under specific pre-arrangements.

"Security" authorities have launched a crackdown on such companies," said Mr. Sarairoh. "Many of them have been closed down and those behind them have been sent to court."

During the weekly briefing, the minister's attention was particularly focused on the existence of commercial offices which seem to have monopolised access to the limited telephone lines available between Jordan and Iraq.

Such monopoly, the minister was told, prevents many in the large Iraqi community living in Jordan from communicating with Baghdad.

Mr. Sarairoh said he was aware of the problem, and one of the counter-measures adopted by the JTC was regular and automatic interruptions of the lines to Baghdad every 30 minutes.

Effectively, the measure means that no one is able to remain on a line to Iraq for more than 30 minutes.

Direct dialling is no longer available to Iraq. Every call made to Iraqi numbers is answered by an operator, who in turn connects to the called number.

Some commercial offices in Jordan have arrangements under which the Iraqi operator comes back to the line after the completion of each connected call and reconnect to other numbers, according to sources.

This means that a connection or connections made with the central operator or operators could continue for several hours and occupy all the available lines and deny others from access. Regular and automatic 30-minute interruptions in the lines do not solve the problem in full, but help to a large extent, noted Mr. Sarairoh.

The minister noted that the JTC is now offering a 20 per cent reduction on international calls made during the day and 50 per cent at night.

"In three months, the company might offer a further reduction provided that the revenues in this period meet with the target," he said.

Addressing complaints regarding the recent revamping of rates for calls within Jordan, Mr. Sarairoh said the move was aimed at "balancing" rates among all governorates. He conceded that rates might have gone up in some cases but pointed out that they had been reduced in other areas on the "basis of average costs."

The minister also said the JTC was planning a complete computerisation of its operations and that related tenders would be announced soon.

Caller identification and "intelligent" and automatic messages of changed telephone numbers will be some of the services offered by the computerisation, he said.

Subscribers will also be able to settle their bills by credit cards through the Internet and also inquire about the status of their accounts.

The JTC is offering a bonus to employees if they manage to connect 100,000 new lines this year, said the minister, adding that the company is also setting up a new customer services department headed by an official with the rank of vice-president.

"By the end of this year," said Mr. Sarairoh, "the supply would outstrip demand and the company will be offering extra lines to subscribers."

The minister was asked why out-of-turn connections were continuing to be given in some areas while earlier applicants continued to wait. The minister explained that the "technical network might already be there in some areas and absent in other areas under the operations of one exchange."

As such, a new applicant from an area where the network exists would be immediately given a line whereas an old applicant would have to wait until his or her area is linked to the network, he said.

The JTC is also planning to take charge of printing its own bills instead of using Royal Scientific Society (RSS) facilities and would invite bids from manufacturers of printing equipment, said Mr. Sarairoh.

On complaints of discrepancies in billing, the minister said mistakes do occur from time to time and that a technical committee is in charge of reviewing and correcting mistakes if any.

But he cautioned subscribers using cordless phones that their lines could be purposely or inadvertently used by others using the same type of equipment.

"This is an area where the company cannot help its subscribers," he said. "Each subscriber has to be responsible for the use or misuse of his or her line."

Defence lawyers in Masri case request to call 24 persons to witness stand

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The defence in the case of Mazen Masri, accused of killing his two children last year, yesterday asked the Court for permission to subpoena 24 persons to testify in the case.

On Sept. 25, Mr. Masri confessed to authorities that he had poisoned his two children Hanin, nine, and Hadi, six, by administering cyanide, in the guise of "vitamins," which he had brought from a business trip in Canada.

Mr. Masri reportedly also

confessed to a previous attempt to murder his wife and his two children by opening a gas bottle while the three slept in the couple's room.

Five of the 24 people whom Defence Attorney Ahmad Najdawi wanted to subpoena were present when Mr. Masri made his confession.

Criminal Prosecutor Ali Abu Hjeleh contested the attorneys request to summon the 24 witnesses "respectfully" the first five witnesses listed "in the defence's sheet."

The five witnesses against whom Mr. Abu Hjeleh was protesting,

were Attorney General Fathi Rifai, Criminal Prosecutor Abdul Aziz Rawashdeh, Prosecutors Fouad Daradkeh and Mohammad Najdawi, and Shmeisani Precinct Chief Major Fathel Hmoud.

Mr. Najdawi told the Jordan Times, following the conclusion of the 10-minute court session, that he is planning to question the five witnesses regarding statements made by his client during interrogation which were not those in front of the criminal prosecutor.

"It is my right to summon any person to ensure justice and to clarify matters

pertaining to my client," he stated.

On Jan. 16, Mr. Masri retracted earlier confessions, claiming they were obtained under psychological torture and duress.

The two children were found collapsed by their mother, Hiam Hamoudah, at 7:15 a.m. in their apartment in the Abu Oneizah Housing Complex after she went to give her husband a ride to work at 6:45 a.m.

According to the prosecutor's charge sheet in his confession, Mr. Masri stated that he began to undergo domestic turbulence three months subsequent to his 1987 marriage as well as

financial constraints following his second child's birth.

In his confession, Mr. Masri apparently blamed his wife for these problems, claiming that she was "extravagant and refused to help him in his business" which he had established in 1991.

The Court, headed by Judges Abdul Ruhman Tawfiq, Ismael Hmouz and Mufleh Mubeidin, postponed the case until Jan. 15 to rule on the attorney's and the criminal prosecutor's request.

Kingdom logged on to 'information highway'

By Tanya Habjouqa
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A seminar aimed at promoting the Internet and electronics systems in Jordan was held by the U.S.-based but internationally active Gartner Group here yesterday.

The group, a management and information systems consultant company with a branch in Amman, brought two analysts to discuss topics ranging from economic usage of the Internet to whether it is a "utopia or paradise lost."

"I found the talks very insightful as the future of Jordan's information highway seems to be advancing slowly but surely," Quis Asfour of the Comcent Trading and Contracting

company concluded at the end of the seminar.

Hubert Delany, a Gartner Group analyst, felt that questions from those who attended the seminar were intelligent.

"It seems that what Jordan is missing is not technology but guidance as to how to use the Internet efficiently," he told the Jordan Times.

"There is a great opportunity for Jordan to enter the international scene; if the government supports this technology, Jordan could be operating at full speed within two to three years," added analyst Alexander Kopriva.

According to Ala Shaban of the Amman branch, the Gartner Group plans on hosting many more such events in the future.

Man announces land donation to RSCN

AMMAN (J.T.) — Abdullah Nabhan, resident of Shajarah in the Ramtha district of northern Jordan, Monday announced a donation of a seven-dunum plot of land to the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN).

The conservatory announced that it will immediately embark on the creation of the reserve once the land ownership transfer has been completed.

In his announcement, Mr. Nabhan said that he discussed the matter with the RSCN and asked that the reserve, proximate to the Yarmouk River, house endangered species of animals and plants and be planted with evergreens.

Expressing appreciation to Mr. Nabhan for his generous donation, a RSCN spokesperson stated that legal procedures for the

transfer of land ownership will be implemented prior to cultivating trees and building a needed fence to protect the land. He also affirmed that animals will be kept there.

He said that the RSCN plans to convert the new reserve into a training centre for students to instruct them as to how to protect endangered species, plants and trees.

According to Mr. Nabhan, who donated the seven dunums from his 50 dunum property, injury inflicted upon animals and plants on the part of hunters motivated him to donate the land to the RSCN which, he stated, can care for species threatened with extinction notably partridges, hares and foxes.

He said that the Shajarah region was once covered with trees, however contin-

ued deforestation threatened the area and caused an imbalance in nature with the result that many species are threatened with extinction.

Mr. Nabhan stated that he would help the RSCN in its endeavours by planting trees.

With the creation of the new reserve, the RSCN will maintain seven reserves in the Kingdom: in Azraq, Shaumari, Wadi Mujib, Zubiya, Dana and Wadi Rum as well as the Shajarah reserve.

The RSCN is a private, voluntary organisation with public service status. Established in 1966, under the patronage of His Majesty King Hussein, the society is dedicated to the conservation of nature and natural resources and aims to protect indigenous species as well as their natural habitat.

WHAT'S GOING ON

CONCERT

* Performance by Al Hannounah Band of Popular Art at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

- * Photographic exhibition on the life of the Founder of Pakistan at Quaid-e-Azam Hall, Embassy of Pakistan, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 622787, 624680), until January 31.
- * Works by contemporary Arab artists entitled "The New Collection" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, (Tel. 643251/2), until Feb. 27.
- * Works by Jordanian artists at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Jan. 30.
- * Works of small paintings by Jordanian and Arab artists at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens St. (Tel. 687598), until Jan. 14.
- * Works by Spanish painter Clara Amado at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman until Jan. 15.

Ceremony to mark dam wall elevation

AMMAN (J.T.) — A ceremony is slated to be held in the Jordan valley today, under the patronage of HRH Crown Prince Hassan, to mark the completion of wall elevation of the Kafrein dam near the town of South Shuneh, boosting the capacity of its reservoir from 4.5 million cubic metres (MCM) to eight million.

The project was implemented by the Ministry of Water and Irrigation in conjunction with the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) and executed by an Italian construction company.

The dam was originally constructed in 1966 and in the subsequent three decades sediments accumulated on the floor effectively reducing the dam's storage capacity by two million cubic metres which decreased the

amount of water available for irrigation of the surrounding area. JVA Secretary General Dureid Mahasneh explained.

He was quoted by Al Dustour daily Monday as affirming that the work, which started in early 1995, to raise the dam's walls from 30 metres to 37 metres was a measure to compensate for the reduction in the reservoir's storage capacity due to sediments and silt.

Mr. Mahasneh maintained that equipment such as pipes and hydraulic apparatus broke down in 1994 but have now been replaced.

The dam's reservoir was originally built to irrigate 16,000 dunums of land in the Kafrein and Hisban regions at an overall cost of JD 8.5 million, he said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Tourism committee discusses draft law

AMMAN (Petra) — Parliament's tourism committee yesterday held a meeting under the chairmanship of Deputy Tawfiq Kreishan. The committee discussed amending the 1996 draft law on tourism.

Jordanian-French group to convene

AMMAN (Petra) — A joint Jordanian-French committee will convene at the end of this month. Their meetings will focus on bilateral ties in cultural and scientific fields.

Department issues flash flood warning

AMMAN (Petra) — The Kingdom will be affected by a cold depression centred over Cyprus today, according to the Meteorology Department. Rain will fall in all of the Kingdom until Friday evening, it said. The department warned of flash floods in low areas particularly in the south.

623 traffic accidents in one-week period

AMMAN (J.T.) — A total of 623 road accidents were reported in the one-week period leading up to Jan. 4 resulting in the death of 14 people and the injury of 242 others, the Traffic Department announced Monday.

The department released a statistical bulletin noting that 74.3 per cent of the total accidents involved vehicle collisions and that 564 accidents occurred inside cities, responsible for the death of four and the injury of 48.

The report affirmed that most of those injured in these accidents were under the age of 10.

It also stated that there were 75 fewer accidents than the previous week but that the number of resultant deaths and injuries registered an increase of six in both categories.

Meanwhile, the Civil Defence Department (CDD) yesterday announced that its staff handled 99 incidents in the 24 hours leading to Monday morning resulting in the injury of 25 people.

These injuries resulted from fires, falls and other incidents.

**SAVE WATER
EVERY DROP
COUNTS...**

Military on standby as South Korea braces for mass strikes

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea's military was placed on standby to keep public transport and communications running as the government braced Monday for an all-out nationwide strike against a new labour law.

The preparations came as workers and tear-gas-firing police scuffled in downtown Seoul and militant union leaders rebuffed ruling party attempts at an 11th-hour dialogue.

A Defence Ministry spokesman told AFP "preparations are being made" to use soldiers to prevent the strikes from bringing the country to a standstill on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The ministry gave no figures, but reports said training had already been completed for 2,500 soldiers with experience running subways, communications, and other public facilities.

President Kim Young-Sam, as defiant as the unions, went on national television to say he stood by the controversial law, which the unions charge heavily favours management, but said he was working out a benefits package for work-

ers. "I could have delayed the revision of the labour law and spend the rest of my term very comfortably. But I couldn't, because it was a very urgent task which will determine the future course of the nation," Mr. Kim said.

The special measures package would "dispel workers' concern, improve their lives and ensure a stable employment system," he said.

Prime Minister Lee Soo-Sung ordered measures to deal with the "crisis," as the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU) said 700,000 workers would quit 3,000 workites starting early Tuesday.

The head of the ruling New Korea Party (NKP), Lee Hong-Koo, came away from a futile 11th-hour effort to talk to militant unionists with nothing but insults.

The FKTU, with a membership of some 1.2 million, and the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), have said nothing but repeal of the law will stop the strikes from taking

place, and paralysing the country.

The FKTU says public sector workers will go out for 39 hours from 4:00 a.m. Tuesday (1900 GMT) until 7:00 p.m. Wednesday.

But some 30 per cent, classified as "essential personnel" in vital sectors such as communications, railroads and ports, would stay on the job "to avoid a national crisis," the union said.

The smaller KCTU, which claims half a million members, has set a midnight Wednesday deadline for the government to repeal the law, railroaded through parliament on Dec. 26.

Financial union workers said they would keep the Seoul stock exchange and banks operating during the strike and Seoul's Kimpo International Airport will be open, a Korean Air spokesman told AFP.

Late Monday the unions of three of the eight lines on the Seoul subway, which carries four million commuters daily, reversed a decision to ignore the strike order under pressure from fellow unions.

Newspapers, television stations and the country's sole news wire service said most of their unionised staff were expected to walk out but that management would keep working.

The unions say the December law gives employers a freer hand to fire workers and extend working hours.

The government, citing spiralling wages and lack of labour mobility, says continued high wages and inflexibility of labour would lead to massive unemployment.

The Trade Ministry, meanwhile, put the value of production losses in the 19 days since nationwide industry strikes against the law began on Dec. 26 at 1.96 trillion won (\$2.4 billion), the lion's share in the auto industry.

As tear-gas again clouded downtown Seoul, some 15,000 workers staged street demonstrations in the southern industrial city of Ulsan, the stronghold of the Hyundai business group, where a worker tried to burn himself to death in protest against the law Friday, news reports said.



A South Korean worker kicks at police during a clash following a labour rally in the trendy shopping district of Myeongdong in Seoul. Fugitive union leaders, taking refuge from arrest in the nearby Myeongdong Cathedral said they would not compromise over a controversial new labour law which they are demanding the government to repeal (Reuters photo)

Taiwan, N. Korea sign nuclear waste pact

TAIPEI (R) — State Utility Taiwan Power Co. said Monday it would ship 60,000 barrels of Taiwan's nuclear waste to Stalinist reclusive North Korea and was seeking further deals with Russia and the Marshall Islands.

The deal was signed Saturday and the 60,000 barrels would be shipped to North Korea within two years, company President Hsi Shih-Chi told reporters in Taipei.

"We also are continuing to contact the Marshall Islands and Russia," Mr. Hsi said on state-funded television.

Under the contract, Taipower has an option to ship a total of up to 200,000 barrels of nuclear waste to North Korea.

Mr. Hsi would not disclose financial arrangements with impoverished North Korea, which presumably extracted a substantial cash payment in exchange for agreeing to take the waste.

"We have an agreement with the North Korean side not to reveal the expenses for handling the nuclear waste," a Taipower spokesman said by telephone.

The utility offered in August 1996 to pay 3.2 billion Taiwanese dollar (\$116 million) to local governments and residents in Taiwan if they could offer a dump for the nuclear waste.

North Korea's domestic nuclear programme has fuelled a destabilising row with capitalist rival South Korea and the United States in recent years.

Pyongyang entered a landmark pact with Washington in 1995, agreeing to allow international inspections and replace its Soviet-era reactors with modern Seoul-financed light-water ones that produce less weapons-grade plutonium.

The deal has been threatened by renewed sabre-rattling and military provocations along the world's last cold war frontier.

Taipei decided in July 1996 to stop dumping nuclear waste at its tiny Lanyu Island, Taiwan's only nuclear waste dump, after strong protests by local aborigines and growing numbers of anti-nuclear activists.

Since 1982, Taiwan has stored 97,672 barrels of nuclear waste at Lanyu, nearing its capacity of 98,112 barrels, according to official figures.

Taipower has promised to remove all nuclear waste from Lanyu by 2002 and has been seeking alternate sites overseas.

"The North Korea contract will enable us to proceed ahead of schedule," the Taipower spokesman said.

Taleban willing to talk but reject key Afghan peace conditions

KABUL (AFP) — The Taleban regime rejected key conditions for a negotiated peace in Afghanistan here Monday, as U.N.-mediated talks between the country's warring factions began in neighbouring Pakistan.

The Taleban's vice minister for foreign affairs, Sher Mohammad Stanakzai, told AFP here that his side was open to negotiation but effectively rejected the demilitarisation of Kabul, one of the anti-Taleban alliance's key demands.

"We support any U.N. formula (for peace), provided it guarantees an Islamic government and is not against the interests of the nation," he said.

U.N.-brokered talks between senior Taleban officials and leaders of a rival alliance began in Islamabad Monday to negotiate a

peaceful settlement to the war in Afghanistan.

Kabul's demilitarisation is expected to be central to the talks, chaired by U.N. intermediary Norbert Hol and expected to last three days.

Mr. Stanakzai dismissed the idea of a Taleban withdrawal from Kabul, saying such a move would allow members of the opposition coalition to return to the capital and "again start fighting each other."

He said the deployment of an international peace-keeping force would be both difficult to accomplish and dangerous.

"The world will not be ready to send such a force because it would require a lot of expenditure," he said, adding: "The Afghan people have never accepted the presence of foreign forces on their soil."

However, he also rejected the proposed creation of a mixed Taleban-opposition force to maintain order.

It would be impossible to make such different elements work together, he said, citing the opposition warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum, "who has communist officers and generals who do not believe in Islam, or even in God."

Afghanistan's long civil war began after the Soviet Union pulled its troops out of the country in 1989 after a 10-year occupation.

The Taleban — religious fighters seized the capital on Sept. 27 and have taken control of two-thirds of the country's territory, mainly in the south, since it appeared on the scene in 1994.

Pakistani president defends new National Security Council

ISLAMABAD (R) — Pakistani President Farooq Leghari defended a controversial new security council Sunday, while the military denied it had any interest in politics.

Mr. Leghari denied that last week's creation of a defence and National Security Council, grouping top generals and government ministers under his own chairmanship, had shifted power towards the presidency or given the army a decisive political role.

He told reporters working for foreign news organisations that a new elected government could do away with the council, which has only advisory powers, if it felt it was unnecessary.

"I don't see any fears, or dangers, or difficulties," he said. "Where is the fear of it turning into a presidential system or another body which is above parliament?"

Mr. Leghari, who dismissed Benazir Bhutto's government on Nov. 5 on disputed charges of corruption and misuse, said polls set for Feb. 3 would be the cleanest in Pakistan's history, thanks to the work of his caretaker government.

"The elections shall be held in as free and fair and transparent a manner as possible," he said. "I think these elections will be the cleanest Pakistan ever had."

Some Pakistani newspaper commentators have suggested that the security council would embroil the army in politics.

"The manner of this council's conception, timing of birth, formation and mandate make it a super-government," wrote Syed Tahir Hussain in the English-language daily The News.

"This is likely to create discord and make the political system unworkable," he added. "It will also suck the army back into political controversies, forcing it to openly take sides."

army staff General Jehangir Karamat as endorsing the council but saying it would avoid politics.

"We have insisted repeatedly that we are not interested in politics," Gen. Karamat said. "The council has been formed by the president and approved by the cabinet and is in the best interests of the country. The army will provide input whenever it is required to."

"The army will stay as far away as possible from politics," he told the paper. "It is not good for the army to interfere directly or indirectly into political affairs."

Pakistan has been under military rule for 24 of the 50 years since it gained independence from Britain in 1947.

Gen. Karamat said the council would be excellent for coordinating policy, but could be scrapped by the next government if it so desired. "If the new government does not want (the council), it can do away with it. We have no problems," he declared.

Mr. Leghari also said an elected government was free to abolish the council, but argued that it would promote continuity and merely formalised the previous system of informal consultations between the president, prime minister and chief of army staff.

Parliament remained supreme and the military would remain subordinate to the cabinet, he added. "Why are people so afraid of the president?" Mr. Leghari asked. Presidents had always been involved in policy-making.

Mr. Leghari has said in the past that he would try personally to ensure that any new government upheld economic reforms agreed by the caretakers with the International Monetary Fund.

The president said an anti-corruption drive launched by the caretaker government should continue after the elections, and hit back at

critics who say the process has languished.

"All these people who wanted a complete slaughter of the political leadership and all those whom they termed as... old faces tainted by corruption, I have been again and again reiterating that we can't do anything against the law," he said.

He said 68 cases of alleged corruption had been referred to the newly-created Ehtesab (accountability) Commission. Several had been referred to special judicial tribunals.

Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, whose Pakistan Muslim League (PML) is from-runner in next month's polls, said Monday that Pakistan had become a laughing stock and must clean up its tarnished reputation.

He said the PML would do well in the Feb. 3 elections, called by President Leghari.

"Pakistan needs now to project a new image in the world," Mr. Sharif told Reuters in an interview. "We have become a laughing stock where every time the president and prime minister are fighting one another. This must now come to an end."

Mr. Sharif, whose own government was toppled under the amendment in 1993, took a cautious line when asked if a PML government would try to scrap the legislation and refused to say if he believed that the president should enjoy such powers.

"That is an issue that needs to be debated in parliament," he said. "The new parliament will certainly debate that issue."

Mr. Sharif, 52, was also cagey about whether a PML government would retain the Council for Defence and National Security formed this month by Mr. Leghari and his caretaker cabinet, giving the military its first formal advisory role in government affairs.

Japan battles to protect nuclear plants from slick

MAIZURU, Japan (R) — Japanese authorities kept up multi-front battles against oil spills from an ageing Russian tanker Monday, tightening a cordon around nuclear power plants and pouncing on new slicks as they emerged.

"MSA boats are placing priority on keeping oil away from the nuclear plants, but there are lots of other patches of oil to deal with," a Maritime Safety Agency (MSA) spokesman said.

Oil from the tanker Nakhodka, which broke up on Jan. 2, has reached an outer ring of oil fences protecting 15 nuclear reactors on Wakasa Bay, the world's greatest concentration of nuclear power plants.

Speaking in the town of Maizuru, which is headquarters for the cleanup effort, the MSA spokesman told reporters that the number of patrol boats for the Wakasa Bay operation had been increased from four to 10.

More oil fences are being erected inside the ring. The

twin defences have so far succeeded in keeping oil from reaching intake pipes that provide cooling water to the reactors. "No oil has been sighted within one nautical mile of Takahama Nuclear Power Plant's water intake," the spokesman said.

A total of 50 patrol boats, 10 aircraft and 10 helicopters are now involved in the overall operation to protect a 450-kilometre stretch of coast on the Sea of Japan, about 320 kilometres west of Tokyo.

"It will require two to three days of tracking to determine whether and how much oil is flowing from the two parts of the ship," the spokesman said.

Maritime officials still have no firm figure on how much oil has escaped from the 13,157-tonne tanker since it broke in two in stormy seas.

They have said an earlier estimate of 3,700 tonnes (26,000 barrels) was too low. The 26-year old tanker was carrying 19,000 tonnes

(133,000 barrels) of fuel oil. Instead of using chemical detergent, maritime authorities were scooping up the oil with fishing nets and buckets into oil drums because of environmental concerns, the spokesman said.

Asked if the operations were going smoothly, he said: "You can say the drums are filling up and piling up smoothly."

MSA officials were puzzling over how to deal with the bow of the ship, which ran aground 100 metres from Mikuni Beach and may still contain thousands of tonnes of heavy oil.

"The plan is to remove the bow but no decision has been made on how to do it," an MSA official said.

The stern, where two-thirds of the oil was stored, sank about 115 kilometres offshore. Authorities are uncertain how much of that may be leaking and might reach the coast.

The 31-man crew of the tanker was rescued, but the captain is missing and presumed dead.

Thousands of volunteer workers, many without protective clothing, braved toxic oil fumes to continue scraping mud-like oil off beaches and carrying it away in buckets.

Volunteers from 200 kilometres away in the city of Kobe have helped in the cleanup effort.

They said they were paying back a debt of gratitude for help to their city in the aftermath of the January 1995 Kobe earthquake in which thousands died.

Some locals residents, numbed by devastation to a once-pristine area of fertile fishing grounds and tourist resorts, questioned whether reaction to the spill was too slow.

Taxi driver Yoshiaki Yamashita said officials should have prepared oil cleanup equipment well in advance.

"You'd think that an island nation like Japan, which imports so much oil, would have more of the kind of cleanup vessels needed for this kind of crisis," he said.

Nuclear waste shipment leaves France for Japan

CHERBOURG, France (R) — A British ship carrying processed nuclear waste left the French Channel port of Cherbourg Monday on a controversial journey to Japan, witnesses said.

Greenpeace anti-nuclear protesters demonstrated against the shipment, processed at the nearby nuclear plant of La Hague, but did not try to stop the freighter Pacific Teal from sailing.

Some 20 members of the Greenpeace environmentalist group left after demonstrating by the gates of the port overnight as 40 containers of nuclear waste were being loaded in two batches onto the Pacific Teal under heavy police protection.

Greenpeace said in a statement it had alerted countries along the ship's

likely route of possible dangers to marine environment. "The most immediate danger is for France, Spain and Portugal," it said.

The ship will be tracked by satellite and its route has been kept secret. The French state company Compagnie Generale Des Matieres Nucleaires (COGEMA), which runs the plant at La Hague, said it would disclose it Tuesday.

The waste initially came from Japan and was processed at La Hague under a deal between COGEMA and 10 Japanese power companies. It was carried by train to Cherbourg Friday.

It was the second such shipment to Japan from France, and the head of reprocessing at COGEMA,

Jean-Louis Ricaud, told reporters there would be one or two shipments to Japan every year.

Greenpeace, which is protesting at the secrecy surrounding such shipments, said it expected 3,000 tonnes of plutonium waste to be moved over the next 10 to 15 years.

Previous shipments have caused an outcry among anti-nuclear militants. Thousands of protesters battled police in Germany when one such shipment from France arrived there last May.

The Pacific Teal's trip followed a report by French scientists warning of risks of leukaemia from using the beach and eating fish and shellfish caught near La Hague reprocessing plant in

Normandy. The research, published in the British Medical Journal by French government scientists Jean-Francois Viel and Dominique Pobel last week, was based on 27 cases of leukaemia in people aged under 25 around La Hague.

They called for more research to be carried out around La Hague as well as the Sellafield and Dounreay nuclear reprocessing plants in Britain.

COGEMA has said the survey was carried out on such small samples of population that its conclusions were baseless. It has said its own numerous and regular surveys of the plant's environmental impact showed radiation to be insignificant.

Major calls for drugs clampdown in Khyber

PESHAWAR (R) — British Prime Minister John Major travelled Monday to the Khyber Pass, the legendary gateway to the Indian sub-continent and a key route for heroin destined for Europe, and called for tough action against drugs.

Mr. Major, in Pakistan on the last leg of a South Asian tour which has already taken him to India and Bangladesh, told reporters he wanted a first-hand view of the problems faced by agencies trying to combat drugs in the wild and remote area.

"It is very important that Western Europe acts very early and decisively to cut off drug routes where they can," Mr. Major told reporters before his visit.

Mr. Major said he would be looking for new ways European nations could step

up the fight against drugs by aiding local police and anti-drug forces or by providing additional funds. "You need to take action at the source... It's a particularly evil and pernicious trade," he said.

The Khyber Pass is the high-point — both figuratively and literally — in the British prime minister's South Asian tour, which has taken him away from the relentless build-up to the general election he faces at home less than four months away.

Mr. Major, under fire from members of his ruling Conservative Party over his decision to go on a week-long foreign trip while the opposition Labour Party holds a commanding poll lead, has taken a political risk by going to the Khyber Pass.

He will be tightly protected by Pakistani security forces as he tours the home area of warrior tribes who for centuries have survived by smuggling or preying on travellers.

But the British media is already preparing comparisons with other leaders who have set foot in the pass before him — from Darius the great of Persia to, perhaps more worryingly for him, Margaret Thatcher, who was ousted in favour of Mr. Major.

The pass has been the scene of dramatic military struggles by British regiments who guarded it against incursions from Afghanistan and from the fierce Pathan tribes who live there.

Mr. Major said he was also aware he risks ridicule at home from tabloid headline writers comparing his visit to a 20-year-old cult British comedy film called Carry On Up The Khyber.

But Mr. Major, who held talks Sunday with Pakistan President Farooq Leghari and dismissed Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and met more political leaders Monday, is unfazed, basking in the enthusiastic reception he has received throughout his tour.

He stressed in his talks Sunday that his aim in visiting Pakistan was to boost trade and encourage democracy.

Pakistan holds elections next month to choose a new National Assembly to replace the one dissolved by Mr. Leghari after he dismissed Ms. Bhutto in November on disputed corruption charges.

Accused in Rwanda genocide trial questions witness

ARUSHI, Tanzania (R) — The U.N. tribunal in Rwanda Monday took the unprecedented step of granting a witness the right to question a witness in a genocide trial.

Prosecution lawyer Paul Akayesu, the former mayor of Kigali, was granted the right to question a witness in the genocide trial.

Mr. Akayesu, 43, has pleaded not guilty to charges of genocide and crimes against humanity. If convicted, he faces life imprisonment, the tribunal's maximum penalty.

"We will authorize the witness to cross-examine the witness for the defense," Judge Kama said in response to Mr. Akayesu's request.

Asked if she understood the court's decision, witness K. replied: "No problem."

The witness has said she watched Mr. Akayesu order a group of eight Tutsis to be killed before she fled to kill the Tutsis.

She also said Mr. Akayesu imprisoned her and threatened to kill her unless she provided information on the whereabouts of other Tutsis.

Judge Kama said a separate request by Mr. Akayesu to dismiss his two defence lawyers would be considered at the end of the week. But the decision to allow him to cross-examine a witness effectively sidelined his lawyers.

Mr. Akayesu is the first suspect to be tried before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda for crimes between April and June 1994, when an estimated 800,000 Tutsis were killed.

The slow moving process has been accompanied by allegations of mismanagement and abuses by the court. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has promised corrective action to clean it up.

Tribunal registrar Andre Adede, a Kenyan, defended his performance Saturday and said he would not resign despite a critical U.N. report alleging mismanagement and misconduct.

Mr. Adede told reporters at the northern Tanzanian town of Arusha, where the court is based, that he and his colleagues had done much to get the tribunal working despite a critical lack of resources.

A report prepared by the U.N. Inspector-General, Karl Pischke of Germany, alleged abuses, administrative lapses and misconduct in the tribunal. The report has been presented to new Secretary-General Kofi Annan who promised Thursday to make changes at the Arusha tribunal.

The tribunal was set up by the U.N. Security Council to prosecute genocide in Rwanda in 1994. Mr. Akayesu's trial began last Thursday.

Accused in Rwanda genocide trial questions witness

ARUSHA, Tanzania (R) — The U.N. Tribunal Rwanda Monday took the unprecedented step of granting a request by an ethnic Hutu accused of genocide to directly cross-examine the first prosecution witness.

Presiding Judge Laity Kama said Jean-Paul Akayesu, the former mayor of Rwanda's Taba Commune, was legally entitled to cross-examine a Tutsi accountant at the court only as witness K to protect her identity.

Mr. Akayesu started cross-examination in French from behind a screen flanked by two security guards while witness K replied through an interpreter. Cross-examination immediately led to heated exchanges and interruptions by Judge Kama, who ordered clarifications from both Mr. Akayesu and witness K.

Witness K told the court Friday that Mr. Akayesu had personally ordered the slaughter of Tutsis in his commune during the 1994 genocide.

Mr. Akayesu, 43, has pleaded not guilty to charges of genocide and crimes against humanity. If convicted he faces life imprisonment, the tribunal's maximum penalty.

"We will authorise the accused, Jean-Paul Akayesu, pursuant to Article 20 paragraph three to cross-examine the witness for the prosecution," Judge Kama said in response to Mr. Akayesu's request.

Asked if she understood the court's decision, witness K replied: "No problem."

The witness has said she watched Mr. Akayesu order a group of eight Tutsis to be hacked to death before telling Hutus to kill the commune's Tutsis.

She has also said Mr. Akayesu imprisoned her and threatened to kill her unless she provided information on the whereabouts of other Tutsis.

Judge Kama said a separate request by Mr. Akayesu to dismiss his two defence lawyers would be considered at the end of the week. But the decision to allow him to cross-examine a witness effectively sidelined his lawyers.

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The slow-moving process has been accompanied by allegations of mismanagement and abuses by the court. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has promised decisive action to clean it up.

Tribunal registrar Andronic Adede, a Kenyan, defended his performance Saturday and said he would not resign despite a critical U.N. report alleging mismanagement and misconduct.

Mr. Adede told reporters in the northern Tanzanian town of Arusha, where the court is based, that he and his colleagues had done much to get the tribunal working despite a critical lack of resources.

A report prepared by the U.N. inspector-general, Karl Paschke of Germany, alleged abuses, administrative lapses and misconduct in the tribunal. The report has been presented to new Secretary-General Kofi Annan who promised Thursday to make changes at the Arusha tribunal.

The tribunal was set up by the U.N. Security Council to prosecute genocide in Rwanda in 1994. Mr. Akayesu's trial began last Thursday.



A wounded opposition protester faces a riot policeman as thousands of supporters of the anti-Communist Union of Democratic Forces gathered in front of the Presidential office in Sofia (Reuter photo)

Warning strikes in Bulgaria as election pressure grows

SOFIA (R) — Bulgarian trade unions planned to start one-hour warning strikes on Monday as pressure grew on Bulgaria's ex-Communist rulers to hold a general election nearly two years ahead of schedule.

The Promyana Trade Union said dockers at Varna Port would strike Monday afternoon and miners in the Rhodope Mountains were expected to join them Tuesday. A general strike would be held next week if the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) did not yield to the opposition's demands.

"We are preparing a nationwide strike but we would not want to go ahead with it because the economy is in a bad state as it is and such a strike will finish it off," Dimitar Dimanov, deputy president of the Promyana Trade Union, told Reuters.

"This is our final aim if the BSP does not concede to a date for early elections but there are signals that some circles in the BSP have softened their position."

The opposition planned nationwide rallies at 4 p.m. (1400 GMT) as daily protests inspired by severe economic crisis entered their second week.

Tens of thousands of Bulgarians gathered in freezing cold outside Sofia's gold-domed Alexander Nevsky Cathedral Sunday for a peaceful protest after two days of clashes in which the government said 196 people were hurt.

The pro-opposition incoming and outgoing presidents said elections were the only way out of the crisis, and the pro-government speaker of parliament, Blagovest Sendov, said the Socialist Party, which includes leading ex-Communists, should agree to the opposition's demands.

A Promyana spokesman in Varna said about 1,000 dockers were expected to down tools for an hour at 2 p.m. (1200 GMT).

The main opposition trade union Podkrepa said it would join the strike action Wednesday. Under Bulgarian law, full strikes require a week's notice.

A Podkrepa spokesman at the Neftohim Refinery said members would meet Monday night to discuss possible strike action.

The impasse means more delays in much needed economic reforms. The International Monetary Fund had begun talks with the outgoing government, which resigned on Dec. 21, on a strict fixed exchange rate regime as a last resort to restore confidence in the national currency.

Voters delivered a powerful no-confidence vote two months ago by electing opposition lawyer Peter Stoyanov as president with 60 per cent of the vote. He will be sworn in on Jan. 19.

Under Bulgaria's post-Communist constitution, the president is a largely ceremonial figure but both President-Elect Stoyanov

and outgoing President Zhelyu Zhelev have taken firm anti-government stands in the crisis.

Mr. Zhelev said he would not ask the Socialists, who are half way through their four-year parliamentary term, to form a new government unless they agreed to elections.

Mr. Stoyanov said round-table talks could only be held if the ruling party first agreed to elections.

Socialist leader Georgi Parvanov, apparently impervious to the growing pressure, said he was happy to discuss elections but the formation of a new socialist government was a priority and he expected it to stay in power for at least one to 1-1/2 years to carry out the necessary reforms.

Annual inflation for 1996 was 310.8 per cent, and the Socialists' critics blame the party's powerful business allies for unchecked capital flight which has helped push the lev down to 642 to the dollar from 70 a year ago.

After demonstrators besieged parliament for 10 hours Friday and Saturday, Mr. Zhelev declined to ask the Socialists to form a new government.

The opposition has won the backing of trade unions and groups as diverse as the National Gypsies' Union and the tiny rump Bulgarian Communist Party. Monarchists seeking the return of exiled King Simeon also expressed their support.

Yeltsin works in hospital; Lebed sees early elections

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin, recovering from pneumonia just two months after heart surgery, has begun work in hospital but there was no information from the Kremlin early on Monday on when he would be released.

The 65-year-old Russian leader's blood pressure, pulse and temperature were all normal, the Kremlin said in a bulletin issued after doctors examined him early on Sunday.

"To a significant degree, his activity has increased, and B.N. Yeltsin has begun to work on documents," the bulletin said.

A Kremlin spokeswoman contacted at 8.45 a.m. (0545 GMT) on Monday said there was no further information on Mr. Yeltsin's condition.

Mr. Yeltsin was admitted to hospital late last Wednesday and chief Kremlin doctor Sergei Mironov said Friday he expected him to spend another three days there, then three weeks recovering.

On Sunday, Mr. Yeltsin's leading political foe made clear he planned to fulfil the predictions of some political analysts who see him as Russia's next leader.

"I want to be president and I will be president,"

outspoken retired paratroop General Alexander Lebed, 46, said in an interview with Russia's Channel 6 Television.

Asked if he was sure an early election would be called because of the president's health and whether he was ready to take part and win, he replied: "Yes."

Even commercial NTV Television, loyal to the Kremlin, issued a grim warning to Mr. Yeltsin. "For society, the president's illness is mostly not a medical problem, but a political one," it commented in its Itogi Analytical Programme.

"While the medical forecast is optimistic enough, the political one is mostly unfavourable," it said.

Mr. Yeltsin checked into Moscow's Elite Central Clinical Hospital on Wednesday with pneumonia in both lungs, just two months after undergoing quintuple heart bypass surgery and only two weeks after returning to work in the Kremlin.

Pneumonia causes a serious infection or inflammation in one or both lungs, and if both lungs are affected it is considered more serious and harder to treat.

On Sunday the Kremlin did not say when Mr. Yeltsin would leave hospital.

Dr. Mironov has said Mr. Yeltsin was depressed by his latest bout of illness.

The president's continued absence from the Kremlin has raised concern that the man who once symbolised the vigour of the new democratic Russia would not have enough energy to solve the country's persistent and manifold problems.

Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, Russia's constitutional number two, was continuing his holiday near Moscow and some commentators saw it as a sign that it was "business as usual" at the top.

Financial traders also shrugged off Mr. Yeltsin's latest health problems, sending Russian markets into record territory on Friday. Some analysts said they expected more enthusiastic buying Monday.

But neither Mr. Chernomyrdin, nor Anatoly Chubais, the powerful head of the Kremlin administration, have commented on Mr. Yeltsin's illness and NTV said: "Officials do not know what to say. It looks like they are at a loss or even frightened."

Mr. Yeltsin's latest illness has opened up a debate on whether Russia should alter its constitution to shift some power from the president to

the legislature.

One Moscow daily newspaper suggested Saturday that because of his prolonged illnesses it might be time for Mr. Yeltsin, post-Soviet Russia's first president, to step down.

General Lebed, claimed Sunday that the system was close to collapse in Russia, adding that he was ready to "take the country in his arms."

In an interview with TV6 television Gen. Lebed said he was convinced that early presidential elections would have to be called because of the state of Mr. Yeltsin's health, saying the president could not last until the end of his term in 2000.

Gen. Lebed, Russia's most popular leader, also said he had won the support of chess champion Garry Kasparov and other unnamed "extremely intelligent" figures.

"Garry Kasparov will be a member of my party, he is seriously concerned with its theory and its programme," Gen. Lebed said.

The general announced the formation of his own political party last month.

Mr. Kasparov was a leading light in the democratic movement which led to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Zairean troops clash with Tutsi rebels

GOMA, Zaire (AFP) — Zairean troops and former Rwandan soldiers have clashed with Tutsi rebels in eastern Zaire, rebel leader Laurent-Désiré Kabila said Sunday.

Mr. Kabila told AFP there had been "minor clashes" after government troops infiltrated rebel-held North and South Kivu provinces, and westward from Bukavu, the main town of South Kivu, toward the interior of the country.

"They are conducting a war of harassment, but it will still end in their liquidation," he added.

Mr. Kabila was speaking from the luxury villa of Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko in Goma. The villa, the town and the pro-

vinces were seized by the mainly Tutsi rebels after fighting broke out in late October.

The government troops and Hutus were humiliated in that fighting, and forced to retreat westward deeper into Zaire.

Since then however, Mr. Mobutu has promised a major offensive to retake the captured territory.

Mr. Kabila seemed unconcerned about the impact of the recent fighting, and said the situation overall was "stable."

"They (the Zairean authorities) have got enough on their plate taking care of discipline within the army before they think about launching an immediate counter-offensive," he said.

The alliance chief said there had been massive desertion from Zairean army ranks, and that its soldiers had pillaged some 40 localities around Kisangani, 500 kilometres west of Goma.

Mr. Mobutu's promised "crushing" offensive has not so far materialised, and according to Mr. Kabila it is rebel forces that are gaining ground by default.

"We are not advancing anywhere. We are waiting, and we are defending ourselves. And each time we defend ourselves we take a few steps forward," he said.

Asked about reports that a \$2,000 reward had been offered for a chief of the "Mai-Mai" warriors known as Doctor Kaganda, who

was accused of disloyalty to the rebel alliance, Mr. Kabila said: "He was never with us."

Mr. Kabila said Dr. Kaganda was leading a group of "several dozen" Mai-Mai who had burnt out villages and terrorised the local population.

The majority of the ferocious Mai-Mai, who lived in eastern Zaire before the rebel uprising, lent their backing to the alliance and played a considerable role in driving out the Zairean army and Rwandan Hutus.

Recently, some groups of the fiercely-independent warriors have fallen out with the rebel alliance and have refused to be integrated into its "army."

Arctic cold punishes U.S. great plains

MINNEAPOLIS, Minnesota (AFP) — Frigid weather continued to grip the U.S. great plains region, with at least two deaths attributed to the near-Arctic temperatures and heavy snow, officials and reports said.

President Bill Clinton declared a major disaster in North Dakota Sunday, adding that state to South Dakota as eligible for federal aid to deal with the effects of blizzards and bitter cold weather.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency said Washington would pay for snow clearing for emergency routes in all of North Dakota's 53 counties, and said other aid may be provided.

One woman "froze or died of carbon monoxide poisoning when her car stalled" in South Dakota, said Jim Sover, a spokesman for the governor's office, who added that 40 missing people had been found or rescued.

In rural Minnesota, a 57-year-old man was found dead in his truck that ran off an icy road, the Minneapolis Star-Tribune reported.

Minnesota Emergency Services Director Jim Franklin said several weather-related traffic fatalities

had occurred in the state since a cold front pushed through Thursday with heavy snows.

Roads had been closed because of dangerous conditions in parts of Minnesota, and Governor Arne Carlson said he mobilised the National Guard to assist residents in dealing with extreme cold and icy conditions.

Mr. Franklin said some roads had snow banks up to six metres high, and that snow-clearing equipment had opened single lanes in some areas.

"We still have to get two lanes of roadway open and then push the snow back waiting for the next snowstorm," Mr. Franklin said.

"Otherwise the next storm will fill it back up." Temperatures had dipped overnight to minus 38 Celsius in Havre, Montana, and minus 22 Celsius in Minneapolis and Des Moines, Iowa.

"It's so cold outside it hurts even to breathe," one woman in the Woodbury suburb of Saint Paul, Minnesota told AFP Sunday.

The National Weather Service told Colorado residents to "cover as much ex-

posed skin as possible (and) wear multiple layers of clothing" to avoid such weather-related perils as frostbite.

High winds pushed the wind-chill factor — how cold it feels — to minus 51 degrees Celsius. The National Weather Service issued wind-chill advisories for much of the region.

"It's a normal winter-weather scenario," Jerry Schemp of North Dakota's Emergency Management Agency told AFP. "It's a lot different than it is in Florida."

Snow had stopped falling but some roads remained limited to one lane of traffic south of Bismarck to the South Dakota border. Mr. Schemp said. No deaths were reported.

In South Dakota, winds had diminished across the region Sunday and temperatures had improved although forecasters expected more numbing cold throughout next week.

The National Weather Service said some relief from the cold gripping the region could come Wednesday, when temperatures in were forecast to climb to minus five degrees Celsius.

But that climb in temperature was expected to be accompanied by more snowfalls.

On Saturday, a South Dakota woman made national news when she was rescued 40 hours after her car fell into a ditch during a fierce snow storm. Police said they tracked her down thanks to the signal from her cellular telephone.

Karen Nelson, 51, was hospitalised in good condition. In Green Bay, Wisconsin, a National Football League championship playoff game was played in conditions of minus 15 Celsius and wind chills of minus 26 Celsius.

The eastern half of the United States was not spared, either. Residents of Buffalo, New York were digging out from a snow storm that dumped more than 51 centimetres of snow.

Other parts of New York state got up to two metres of lake-effect snow Sunday from Arctic air blowing across the warmer waters of Lake Erie, the weather channel reported.

Snow and freezing rain were reported as far south as Texas and Louisiana.

8 Sri Lankan soldiers killed by mine

COLOMBO (Agencies) — At least eight government soldiers were killed when an army tractor was blown up by a Tamil rebel landmine in Sri Lanka's north Sunday, military officials said.

Ten soldiers were wounded in the mine explosion at Kachchai, in the northern Jaffna peninsula, 320 kilometres north of the capital Colombo, the officials said Monday.

In continued violence in the north over the weekend, the rebels killed five soldiers in a pre-dawn raid Sunday against army defences at Chetikulam in the Vavuniya district, 240 kilometres north of Colombo.

On Thursday, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) made a major assault on the northern army base at Paranthan.

Paranthan is a key road-junction town just south of Jaffna.

The rebels Sunday tried to hand over through the International Committee of the Red Cross what they said were the remains of 27 soldiers killed in the Paranthan battle, but the army refused to accept the bodies, saying they were difficult to identify.

Paranthan was the first military base to come under attack this year by the rebels, who are fighting for an independent homeland for minority Tamils in the north and east of the predominantly Sinhalese Indian Ocean island.

The rebels had declared two days of mourning for their dead in the Paranthan battle, in which 20 rebel leaders died, military officials said.

Up to 700 rebels and more than 200 soldiers were wounded in the Paranthan battle, the Defence Ministry said.

The government says

more than 50,000 people have died in the 14-year conflict. The LTTE says the toll is much higher.

The Sri Lankan Defence Ministry Monday admitted Tamil Tiger guerrilla killed at least 223 government soldiers during the major attack in the north of the country four days ago.

The ministry said the soldiers were killed in Thursday's pre-dawn assault against two key military bases at Paranthan and elephant pass by the LTTE.

The ministry also claimed government forces killed more than 350 Tiger rebels in a massive counter-offensive which also left 700 guerrillas wounded. The number of government soldiers wounded in fighting has been placed at more than 325.

The ministry said all government troops at the two camps had since been accounted for.

Yeltsin proposes referendum on Russia-Belarus union

MOSCOW (AFP) — President Boris Yeltsin has suggested a referendum on the unification of Russia and Belarus, the Kremlin announced Monday.

Mr. Yeltsin made the suggestion to Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko that a poll be held on unification in "one form or another," spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky said.

Russia's links with Belar-

us, a mostly ethnic-Slav populated country on the border of Poland, are already the closest it has with any ex-Soviet republic.

The two countries signed a union treaty on April 2, envisaging the creation of supra-national leadership bodies, but new measures are necessary to kick start and eventually deepen the integration process, Mr. Yastrzhembsky quoted Mr. Yeltsin as saying.

"To speed up integration, it will become possible to or-

ganise a referendum on unification in one form or another between Russia and Belarus," he said.

"Before organising this referendum, everything must be ready, in case it is adopted, for a unified government of the Russian-Belarusian union to be put in place," he added.

Mr. Yastrzhembsky did not make it clear whether the proposed referendum would take place in both countries.

N. Ireland talks resume amid escalating violence

BELFAST (AFP) — Multi-party talks on the future of Northern Ireland resumed Monday after the holiday break against a backdrop of escalating Irish Republican Army (IRA) violence and the threat of loyalist re-prisals.

As the parties returned to Stormont Castle outside Belfast, Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) chief Constable Ronnie Flanagan erased any notion of RUC personnel cuts, first broached during the

IRA's 17-month ceasefire that ended with a London bombing campaign nearly a year ago.

"There is no question of us being a significantly smaller organisation at the moment," Chief Flanagan told the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). "Our duty is to protect the public and my duty is to see that my officers are protected as well."

"We are clearly not currently in an environment free from terrorism," he said.

On the eve of the resumption of talks, the British army on Sunday defused two home-made mortar shells fired at an unmanned police station in County Fermanagh, southern Ulster.

The attack, unclaimed but widely believed to be the work of the IRA, would have been the nationalist paramilitary's fifth in a month.

Sinn Féin, the IRA's political wing, remains excluded from the talks because of IRA's failure to restore a

truce. A loyalist ceasefire, called in late 1994 shortly after that of the IRA, is technically still in force, although there have been stark warnings of loyalist retaliation to further IRA terrorism.

In fact, the continued participation in the talks of two small Protestant parties close to loyalist paramilitaries was in question Monday because of two attacks against Sinn Féin last month, presumed to be the work of the loyalists.

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Intervention that saved the day

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein's lightning visits to Gaza and Tel Aviv Sunday have been, internationally and on the regional level, credited with saving the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks from imminent collapse. The two sides had reached a crisis stage in their negotiations after Israel reneged on the Oslo accords' timetable for further redeployments from the rest of the Palestinian territories. Undoubtedly, the King's personal influence with both Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has succeeded where all other efforts failed. The success of the Monarch's last-ditch effort to revive the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks also vindicates Jordan's stance that maintaining full respect for the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty would turn into a strategic asset whenever there was a need to give the peace process a new lease on life.

The King emerged from his meeting with President Arafat telling reporters in Gaza that "everything is moving very, very well and I hope all these efforts will lead to a happy conclusion." After meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu and submitting to him a compromise formula that was worked out earlier with the Palestinian leader, the Israeli prime minister gave His Majesty full credit for saving the stalled negotiations. "I think because of the important initiative that His Majesty took," Netanyahu told reporters in Tel Aviv, "we have made considerable progress and I think we can envision the end of the negotiations in sight."

But the success of the King's mission does not only lie with the compromise over the date for the completion of all remaining stages of Israeli withdrawals. There might be nothing magical about targeting mid-1998, as the compromise deal details for completing the three further Israeli redeployments, instead of the May 1999 deadline suggested by Israel. In fact, the Oslo accords stipulate late 1997 for completing these projected redeployments.

Rather, the real success lies squarely in His Majesty's ability to win the confidence of the two opposing parties who became locked in a diametrically opposed views on critical features of their peace agreements. Palestinian Minister Nabil Shaath said so in so many words when he told the press Sunday that the personal influence the King has with Israeli leaders is what in fact saved the day.

Now that the peace process has been spared a crippling blow, the parties most directly concerned must work hard to guard against similar stalemates and deadlocks in the future. Israel had effectively brought the talks close to an extremely dangerous point. The Israeli government bears full responsibility for making sure that the salvaged peace effort will not be dealt another severe blow by eschewing the letter and spirit of the Oslo agreements. It is the credibility of Israel and the Likud-led government which is at stake, not to mention the fate of peace-making in this part of the world. The expected Arafat-Netanyahu summit to seal the compromise plan should set the stage for a new era in their relationship and put into motion the implementation of not just the deal on Hebron but the rest of their bilateral agreements in their entirety as well.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Rai said Monday that the Israeli trade fair has met total failure when Jordanians refrained from visiting it or dealing commercially with its organisers. But the failure did not come as a result of the political parties' sit-ins and protests or due to a decision on the part of the government not to interfere or ban the exhibition, said Sultan Hattab. The government did not ban the exhibition, thus offering the Jordanians the chance to decide for themselves what they wanted to do, he continued. In the writer's view, the exhibition failed mainly because of the Israeli government's policies, its anti-peace attitude, its continued acts of terrorism against people in Palestine, its continued occupation of Arab territories and its disregard to the peace accords with Jordan and Palestine. He said the exhibition failed to attract visitors and Jordanians took themselves the decision to visit the fair, regardless of the opposition group's campaign calling on them to boycott it, because they are sensible enough and are not in need of guidance in this affair.

AL RAI hailed in an editorial Monday King Hussein's visit to the self-rule areas of Palestine and the outcome of his talks with the Palestinian and Israeli leaders that were crowned with success. The King's efforts, exerted at the last minute, following reports about a complete deadlock in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, were instrumental in bringing the views of the two sides closer together, the paper added. While fully supporting the Palestinians, King Hussein succeeded in helping the Palestinians achieve their national objectives, on the one hand, and forcing the Israelis to comply with the requirements of peace in implementation of the Oslo agreement, on the other, said the paper. There is no doubt that the King's endeavours are bound to have their positive impact not only on the subsequent Israeli-Palestinian negotiations over a permanent settlement but also on the other Arab-Israeli tracks, said the paper. King Hussein, totally committed to peace as a strategic option and sincerely working to bring about a lasting settlement, has, through his strenuous efforts, contributed to the building of peace in this turbulent region, said the paper.

The View from Fourth Circle

Netanyahu, as Rabin, plumber and Israelite tribal chieftain

By Rami G. Khouri

THE DRAMATIC talks King Hussein held in Gaza and Tel Aviv on Sunday seem to have achieved their aim of sealing the Hebron agreement by closing the gap between Israeli and Palestinian leaders on the final date for Israeli military redeployment from the occupied Palestinian territories. Two Arab states that have officially resolved their political conflict with Israel — Jordan and Egypt — have emerged in recent months as important indigenous players in a diplomatic game that had heretofore been dominated by Israel and the United States.

Two things struck me as fascinating in this week's events: first, the announced departure of U.S. mediator Dennis Ross from the region on Sunday seemed to trigger the Jordanian diplomacy and, second, the very predictable and unspectacular ultimate compromise of mid-1998 as the date of the final Israeli redeployment from the occupied territories.

We should balance our appreciation for the immediate diplomatic activism of the Jordanian, Egyptian and American leaderships with a recognition of the slower, quieter, underlying trends in Israel and Palestine that have made it possible. Behind the drama of eleven-hour diplomacy, I would argue, our region is witnessing historic transformations and very gradual but meaningful ideological shifts — forces and trends that signal the assertion of the Semitic political centre, early signs of the triumph of pragmatism and the beginning stages of the end of absolutism in both Zionism and Arabism.

I use the word "signal" because all we have for the moment are signs, symbols and indications of an emerging centrist majority among the Levantine Semites who define the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. We should note these signs and try to determine whether or not they add up to a meaningful historical trend.

The most fascinating sign of spreading Semitic centrism is the continuing transformation of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu: in opposition, he was the chief opponent of the Oslo peace accord, but today, in power, he is its chief protector against the nationalist screamers from the Israeli right and the man who signed on the dotted line and committed Israel to a strict timetable for withdrawal from most of the occupied territories.

Netanyahu, in this respect, has now essentially undergone the same experience as the late Yitzhak Rabin — having broken bones, imprisoned and killed Palestinians, built and expanded settlements, and tried every possible trick in the book to evade the reality of Palestinian national rights, he has come face-to-face with the frightening consequences of his extremism. More importantly, as a politician, he has sensed that the majority of Israelis in the centre of the political spectrum wants the Oslo accords to be implemented, and that same Israeli majority accepts the slow, systematic emergence of a Palestinian state as long as national or individual security for Israelis are not threat-

ened. He now seems to appreciate that Zionism and Israel are not abstracts or apples in only God's eye: they are organic and historical phenomena that rise and fall, and that endure in safety only insofar as they accommodate themselves to their immediate neighbourhood and their wider regional and global environment.

Benjamin Netanyahu in early 1996 was an impassioned, romantic, very ideological and slightly irresponsible dreamer who played to his people's fears: in 1997, he is a sober, more thoughtful, more responsible plumber, feverishly trying to piece together different political pipes and joints that will stop the severe leakage in his complex coalition, maintain his credibility with the Israeli public and halt the deterioration in Israel's position vis-à-vis its Arab peace partners, Arab public opinion in general, and Israel's many friends around the world.

"Slowly, surely, the militant and nationalistic extremists among both Israelis and Arabs are being relegated to the political sidelines by a centrist Arab, Semitic majority that is less impressed by nationalistic sloganeering and more focused on bringing about real dignity, well-being and security for people on the ground and in their day-to-day lives."

Two things happened to Netanyahu this week: he disengaged from Palestine, and he engaged with Egypt and Jordan. The important fact is not that Netanyahu accepted the mid-1998 compromise date for Israeli withdrawal from occupied Palestine, for he would have done that in any case, at some point soon; the important fact is that he accepted this date within a diplomatic dynamic defined heavily by direct, top-level Jordanian and Egyptian engagement. This represents a defining point of transformation for Benjamin Netanyahu, a moment when he indicates that he is less an American media phenomenon and more a wily old tribal chief of the Israelites — a Semitic tribal chief who, when personally approached, dignified and accepted by neighbouring Semitic tribal chiefs in Egypt and Jordan, responded in the time-honoured manner of recognition, coexistence, and honourable compromise.

The task at hand is far from complete, but for the first time under Netanyahu's watch in Israel it has started in a serious manner.

This dimension of creeping realism is visible in other recent developments, on both the Arab and Israeli fronts. The ongoing Eitan-Beilin talks in Israel to forge a common set of understandings between the Likud and Labour parties on the final status talks with the Palestinians indicate that a clear majority of Israelis expects to live next door to a Palestinian national entity that enjoys more than autonomy rights but less than full sovereignty rights. Even Knesset member Avraham Stern, of the National Religious Party, recently said that he could live with a Palestinian state with limited sovereignty. The slow convergence between Likud and Labour on the issue of Israeli-Palestinian coexistence is mirrored by the Beilin-Abu Mazen document which seeks to define an Israeli-Palestinian blueprint for the final status agreement.

Everywhere, the air is full of negotiators seeking to make or to implement agreements. The important Beilin-Eitan and Beilin-Abu Mazen dynamics suggest a tendency towards pragmatism that is also mirrored, for example, in the relatively low-key reaction by all parties to the recent upsurge in fighting in South Lebanon, the Jan. 1 attack against Palestinians in Hebron by the Israeli soldier Noam Friedman and the pipe bombs in south Tel Aviv late last week. A new poll in Israel even indicates some support among Israelis for Palestinian control over some parts of East Jerusalem.

Slowly, surely, the militant and nationalistic extremists among both Israelis and Arabs are being relegated to the political sidelines by a centrist Arab, Semitic majority that is less impressed by nationalistic sloganeering and more focused on bringing about real dignity, well-being and security for people on the ground and in their day-to-day lives. Thus, a once ideologically half-crazed Israeli prime minister commits Israel to withdrawal from Palestinian lands, and Israelis generally indicate that they can live with a more or less sovereign Palestinian state, in return, in the context of a final status agreement with Israel, Palestinians accept to explore new forms of sovereignty for Israeli settlements and a symbolic Palestinian political presence that allows them to say that Jerusalem is the capital of a Palestinian state.

This process of relegating extremists and absolutists to the sidelines has already run its course in Palestine and Arab states, and now remains to be achieved within Israel. Mr Netanyahu's negotiation with the Palestinians is relatively easy, for there is a majority consensus in Israel and Palestine for the Oslo concept of disengagement and coexistence. His real battle is within Israel, against the reckless zealots of the super-nationalistic right, and it is just beginning.

'There will be no war over Cyprus'

By Gwynne Dyer

"THESE OFFENSIVE missiles will definitely not be deployed. If they are deployed, we will do what is needed. If that means they need to be hit, they will be hit." — Turkish Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller, Jan. 10.

"Turkish aggression has been expressed for some time. We would be playing Turkey's game if we showed particular worry about this and were swept into an atmosphere of crisis." — Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis, Jan. 9.

This "no crisis" talk is a bit rich coming from Costas Simitis who, last November, committed Greece to a \$15 billion arms build-up over the next decade to counter the Turkish "threat". And why is the Turkish foreign minister issuing blood-curdling warnings about the new anti-aircraft missile system being bought by the Greek-Cypriots, when she knows perfectly well that the missiles cannot actually arrive in Cyprus for many months?

Because the Greek and Turkish leaders are de facto co-conspirators in drumming up an entirely fake crisis over Cyprus. There will be no war there over those missiles. It has been years now since I spent some time with Canadian U.N. troops on the Green Line that divides Greek Cypriots from Turkish Cypriots, but even in the late 1980s it looked as if it had been there for generations. In fact, walking the patrol routes between the Greek and Turkish lines in Nicosia (which are generally within easy

shouting distance of each other), I realised that this was what No-Man's-Land must have felt like in the World War I. There was an incident while I was there. Many Cypriots of the older generation speak the other side's language, and to fight the boredom they often shout insults back and forth across the Green Line. So one evening a Greek Cypriot militiaman, incensed by some inconsiderate remarks about his mother or his manhood, stood up on the parapet and mooned the Turkish lines. Whereupon a Turk shot him in the bum.

Small crisis, not many hurt. Which just about sums up the present con-temple as well. Cyprus has really been divided ever since 1964, when an ethnic civil war left the Turkish minority besieged in scattered villages and parts of towns all across the island. But the present Green Line, which puts the northern 40 per cent of the island in Turkish hands, dates from the Turkish invasion of 1974.

"Invasion" is the correct military term, but in this case it does not mean an unprovoked attack. In 1974, a coup by Greek extremists in Cyprus overthrew the existing government (which most people would have called extreme nationalist already), and the new rulers in Nicosia proclaimed their intention to unite Cyprus with the Greek motherland immediately.

The coup was backed by the Greek government in Athens, which was then in the hands of a band of colonels who were as asinine as they were vicious. They had to be

stupid to imagine that they would get away with it, for Cyprus has two motherlands — and the other one, Turkey, has five times Greece's population.

The Turks did not invade at once. First Bulent Ecevit, then the Turkish prime minister, travelled to London to ask the British government, co-guarantor of Cyprus's 1960 constitution, to launch a joint operation from British military bases on the island to remove the coup-makers in Nicosia. Only when the British dodged their responsibilities did the Turkish military operation begin.

It was a piece of cake, for Cyprus is only ten minutes' flight time from Turkey's south coast, while it is a very long way from the nearest part of Greece. Within weeks the Greek Cypriot forces had been defeated, and the island's Turkish-speaking population had all fled within the new line of control. Greek Cypriots living north of that line fled or were expelled, and have not been able to return since. And in Athens, the stupid colonels were replaced by a democratic regime.

It was a rough-and-ready solution, but it has stood the test of time. Two decades later, nobody imagines that Cyprus will ever be incorporated into Greece (or into Turkey either, for that matter). And nobody really believes that the current division of the island into two ethnically pure zones will be undone in this generation or the next.

So what is the current fuss about? Well, if the answer "domestic poli-

tics" sprang unbidden to your lips, you should congratulate them.

According to Prime Minister Costas Simitis's spin doctors, his reason for stoking the present crisis "by encouraging the Greek-Cypriot government to buy surface-to-air missiles that would challenge Turkish air superiority over Cyprus" was to stir up a crisis and force the great powers to pay attention. Then the great powers would pressure the Turks into... well, into what?

Evacuating Cyprus? Betraying the Turkish-Cypriots? What? Nonsense. The spectacle of the great powers milling about over a "crisis" in Cyprus will not move the island one bit closer to a settlement, but it will greatly advance Simitis's standing in Greece. And the Turkish government is playing along, even providing blood-curdling comments of its own, because it too could use a little foreign distraction from domestic troubles (including a burgeoning corruption scandal) at the moment.

Most Greeks fear and hate Turks, and few years pass without something that the Greek media (and the Turkish too, to a lesser extent) can portray as a brink-of-war crisis. But the two countries have not actually gone to war since the early 1920s, for the simple reason that Greece would lose.

Greeks may be paranoid about Turkey, but they are not stupid. There will be no war over Cyprus.

LETTERS

Israelis cannot be rewarded

To the Editor:

JAN. 7, 1997, was a sad day for me. I believe we have given up the hope of democracy. How can we come close to such an ideal when we are willing to support murder, lies, oppression and naked aggression? We have allowed, for the first time, the Israelis to launch an industrial fair here. Not only will it badly affect our own economy and market, it also shows that we are rewarding them for their bad behaviour.

The Israelis are not supporting the peace treaty. Benjamin Netanyahu has no plans to ever follow through on Israeli commitments. He keeps stalling as he tries to wriggle out of the peace treaty promises already signed by his country.

Netanyahu made this clear by stating that the peace treaty was made under duress, as Israel fears for its security. Afraid? Who has the guns and the tanks? Who has America behind them? Afraid?! No one forced them to sign. The Israelis just keep on lying because they really are not interested in peace; otherwise they would work harder to achieve it.

They have provoked all the clashes; they have instated martial law in cities; they are killing women, men and children. They kill the old and the handicapped. By allowing them to hold the industrial fair here, we are not working for peace. We are sending them the message that their behaviour is fine. We are saying we do not care. We are willing to do business deals with them, which means we are willing to murder fellow Arabs because they will use the money they get from Jordanians to fight Palestinians.

Have we forgotten Israeli atrocities? Have we forgotten the massacre at the Ibrahim Mosque as well as the other, older, incidents, like Deir Yassin? Do we really believe that they want to be our friends? They despise us. They do not like anyone who is not a Jew, and they especially hate their cousins, the Arabs. How can we forget Golda Meir's statement that "four million Arabs are not worth one Jewish fingernail"?

And now there is Netanyahu. He made it clear in the past that he hates Arabs. He is one of the most militant Jews.

Have we become so attached to money that we care for nothing else? Do we not have any morals, principles and courage left? Where is our religion? We feel no more, we think no more. May we beg Allah for forgiveness.

Lena Winfrey Sayyed,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

King hosts iftar for lawmakers

His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan hosted an iftar dinner for members of the Jordanian Parliament in the Royal Palace on Monday. The King, accompanied by Queen Alia, welcomed the members of the House of Representatives and the Senate, along with their families. The iftar was a traditional Islamic meal served after sunset. The King expressed his appreciation for the members' dedication to the nation's development and peace efforts.

Palestinian women demand p

A group of Palestinian women in the West Bank demanded the resignation of a senior government official on Monday. The women, who were part of a peacekeeping mission, expressed their frustration over the slow progress of the peace process. They held a peaceful demonstration in front of the official's residence, demanding accountability and faster action towards a lasting settlement.

Jordan frees rocket suspect

Two guerrillas from a northern Israeli group were released by Jordanian authorities on Monday. The guerrillas, who had been detained for their involvement in a rocket attack, were freed after a diplomatic exchange. The release was seen as a gesture of goodwill between the two nations, aimed at fostering peace and stability in the region. The guerrillas were reportedly in good health and were being repatriated to their home country.

King Fahd appoints new head

King Fahd of Saudi Arabia has appointed a new head of the country's border guard on Monday. The new appointee, General Abdulaziz bin Ibrahim, is a highly experienced military officer who has served in various capacities within the Saudi armed forces. His appointment is expected to strengthen the border security and contribute to the overall stability of the kingdom. The King expressed his confidence in the new head's ability to lead the border guard effectively.

AE men deliver supplies to

A group of men from the Arab Emirates delivered supplies to a conflict-ridden area on Monday. The supplies, which included food, medicine, and other essential items, were intended for the people affected by the conflict. The delivery was part of a humanitarian effort to provide relief to the suffering population. The men, who were accompanied by local authorities, faced some challenges during the delivery but managed to reach the destination safely.

ES should pay U.N. in trans

The United States should pay the United Nations for the transportation of its troops, a US House of Representatives committee said on Monday. The committee's report, which was part of a broader review of US military spending, highlighted the need for the US to cover the costs of transporting UN troops. The report argued that this would be a fair arrangement given the significant role the US plays in supporting the UN's peacekeeping efforts.

Sharjah warns tourists over

A conservative Islamic state in the United Arab Emirates has warned tourists on Monday to dress modestly and respect local customs during the month of Ramadan. Sharjah, known for its strict adherence to Islamic principles, issued the warning to ensure that visitors do not offend the local population. The warning included advice on appropriate clothing, behavior, and participation in religious activities. Tourists were encouraged to embrace the local culture and enjoy the unique atmosphere of the holy month.

Quake shakes Cyprus, felt in

An earthquake measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale was felt across Cyprus and in surrounding areas on Monday. The quake, which occurred at a depth of 10 kilometers, caused minor damage to some buildings and disrupted power in certain areas. Seismologists reported that the earthquake was a result of tectonic plate movements in the Eastern Mediterranean region. No casualties or major injuries were reported.

Decision on Ciller possible to

A Turkish parliament committee is expected to decide this week whether to support a motion for the resignation of Turkish Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller. The motion, which was introduced by opposition parties, accuses Ciller of mishandling the Cyprus issue and failing to protect national interests. The committee's decision will be a significant factor in the ongoing political debate in Turkey regarding the Cyprus conflict and the role of the government in resolving it.

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News/Features

NEWS IN BRIEF

King hosts iftar for lawmakers

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Monday hosted an iftar at Al Hussein Youth City attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan for members of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament, diplomatic corps, judiciary servicemen, senior Royal Court officials, Muslim and Christian clergymen, secretaries-general and directors-general of government departments, media representatives, banks chairpersons, and other senior officials in the government and private sectors. Attending the banquet were members of the Royal family, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, and the King's advisers.

Palestinian women demand prisoner release

GAZA (R) — Around 200 Palestinian women blocked the Beit Hanan crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip on Monday demanding the release of Palestinians from Israeli jails, witnesses said. The women, holding Palestinian flags and pictures of their relatives, prevented cars from leaving and entering Gaza, including the vehicle of a Palestinian negotiator who was on his way to talks in Israel, the witnesses said. A prisoner release was one of the issues still under discussion at talks between Israel and the Palestinians on an Israeli army redeployment in Hebron.

Lebanon frees rocket suspects

BEIRUT (AP) — Two guerrillas from Palestinian factions who had been detained for questioning about a rocket attack on northern Israel were freed Monday, judicial officials said. The officials said the two Palestinians from the refugee camp of Rashidiyah in South Lebanon were released because there was no evidence to link them to the attack. They had no further details. Guerrillas fired Katyusha rockets at northern Israel and a South Lebanon enclave held by the Jewish state Wednesday. One rocket struck the Galilee region in northern Israel but no damage or injuries were reported.

King Fahd appoints new head for guards

RIYADH (AFP) — King Fahd of Saudi Arabia on Monday appointed General Talal Ben Mohsen Ali Ankawi as head of the country's border guards, replacing General Mujib Ben Mohammad Al Katani who was dismissed on Dec. 23. The monarch announced the decision in a royal decree, quoted by the official Saudi Press Agency. No reason was given for Gen. Katani's dismissal, also by royal decree. Two days before the decision the general attended a meeting of senior border guard officers headed by Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef.

UAE men deliver supplies to Iraq

BAGHDAD (R) — A group of men from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) arrived in Baghdad on Monday with 32 tonnes of baby milk and medicine for the sanctions-hit Iraqi people. They visited Saddam hospital and were seen caressing malnourished Iraqi babies and holding them in their arms. "Our visit is in harmony with the initiative of UAE President Sheikh Zayed-Ben Sultan Al Nahayan on the necessity of putting an end to differences in the Arab arena," Isa Murad Hassan, one of the group members, told reporters. The UAE president is the most vociferous among Gulf Arab leaders in calling for reconciliation with Baghdad and the lifting of sanctions on Iraq slapped for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are the most adamant in favour of keeping the sanctions in place.

U.S. should pay U.N. in tranches — panel

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States should pay its \$1.3 billion debt to the United Nations in annual instalments of \$200 million, a blue-ribbon panel said in a report released Monday. The task force co-chaired by two former members of Congress also called on President Bill Clinton to increase funds allocated for U.S. diplomacy in his annual budget to be presented on Feb. 6. The international affairs budget, which covers the State Department and foreign aid, should total \$21 billion for the 1998 fiscal year, up from its current level of \$19 billion, the report said.

Sharjah warns tourists over dress code

ABU DHABI (AFP) — A conservative Gulf emirate warned foreign tourists on Monday to stop wearing indecent clothing at beaches and other public places during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. Police in Sharjah, one of the seven members making up the oil-rich United Arab Emirates (UAE), said they would take "preventive" measures to stop any action that conflicts with local traditions. "The measures will specifically target the phenomenon of nudity and indecent swimming suits at open beaches or beaches and swimming places at hotels and other tourist facilities," the official news agency WAM quoted Sharjah police Chief Mohammed Al Mualla as saying. It said hotels and tour agents had also been instructed to advise their clients to abide by Muslim traditions in the emirate in public places. But WAM said Mr. Mualla had ordered the police to follow "flexibility and wisdom" in dealing with the problem and to warn violators that they could be prosecuted under local laws.

Quake shakes Cyprus, felt in Israel

NICOSIA (R) — An earthquake measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale hit Cyprus at noon on Monday, shaking tall buildings, geologists said. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage in the quake, which was felt as far away as the Israeli coastal city of Tel Aviv. "The earthquake measured 5.8 on the Richter scale with an epicentre of 50 kilometres south west of Paphos," a geological service department official told Reuters. The Israel Seismology Institute reported the quake measured 6.3 on the Richter scale. It was felt at 12.19 (1019 GMT) and lasted around 30 seconds in Cyprus.

Decision on Ciller possible today

ANKARA (R) — A Turkish parliamentary commission could decide this week whether to send Deputy Prime Minister Tansu Ciller to the supreme court on corruption charges, the commission head said on Monday. "We may take a vote on the final decision tomorrow," Naci Terzi told Reuters. The 15-member commission has been investigating Mrs. Ciller's substantial personal wealth for questionable gains during her three years as prime minister from 1993. The government has a majority of one deputy in the commission. The current probe is the third corruption investigation against Mrs. Ciller, who joined a coalition with Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan last June — something she vowed she would never do until the corruption allegations emerged.

Lima blames rebels for scuttling direct talks on negotiated end to hostage crisis

LIMA (AP) — Hopes for the first real progress in weeks in Peru's hostage crisis crumbled when the guerrillas demanded that the government produce a plan to free hundreds of jailed comrades. The Tupac Amaru guerrillas have been firm in that key demand since taking over the residence of the Japanese ambassador Dec. 17, and President Alberto Fujimori just as firmly says he would not give in to it. The rebels and government negotiator Domingo Palermo had tentatively agreed to meet on Sunday. But Mr. Palermo said no meeting was held after the rebels, in a message sent via the Red Cross, insisted that he "bring a proposal for the liberation of the (Tupac Amaru) prisoners." He quoted the guerrillas as saying that "otherwise it is preferable that the meeting not take place" — because there would be nothing to discuss. Speaking at a news conference, Mr. Palermo said he sent back a proposal to form a commission to help negotiate a settlement to free the 74 hostages. The panel would be composed of representatives from the government, the rebels, the Red Cross and the Roman Catholic Church. It would agree on a place for negotiations and an agenda which would include "all themes identified in previous contacts," Mr. Palermo said. He didn't answer questions of whether that included the freeing of rebel prisoners. The rebels on Monday placed a sign in a window of the residence asking for an interview with a local television station to respond to Mr. Palermo's proposal. The station, Channel 4, said it was ready to send a news crew into the compound with the government's permission. There was no immediate response from the government. Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto on Monday urged a resumption of talks, but said Japan had "full confidence" in Peru's handling of the standoff. The rebels took more than 500 hostages when they

stormed a cocktail party held to celebrate the birthday of the Japanese emperor. They have released most of their captives in batches, some large, some small. The last release — of seven hostages — came on Jan. 1. Michel Minig, head of the International Red Cross programme in Peru, visited the residence Sunday. "The only thing I can tell you is the hostages are fine," he said afterwards. A soccer game diverted Peruvians from the hostage crisis late Sunday night as capital residents honked horns and cheered Peru's 2-1 victory over Chile in a South American World Cup qualifier. But Japan's ambassador and Japanese executives, Peruvian judges, cabinet ministers and Mr. Fujimori's brother, Pedro, spent another somber night in captivity in the darkened home, the power for its television and lights cut long ago. On Sunday, Mr. Palermo criticised broadcasts of a radio conversation he had with rebel leader Nestor Cerpa, calling the unidentified reporter who recorded and distributed the conversation unethical and dishonorable. The broadcasts were the latest incident in which the news media have crossed the government during the crisis. Police detained a Japanese cameraman and his Peruvian interpreter for four days last week after the pair sneaked into the ambassador's residence and interviewed hostages and Mr. Cerpa. The cameraman, Tsuyoshi Hitomi, 26, of Asahi Television, told a New York City news conference Sunday that Peruvian authorities suggested he leave the country, which he did late Saturday night. He said he was not deported. He also said Peruvian authorities took his passport, glasses and beeper and that he spent the first night in a holding cell on a dirty mattress. He later was moved to an office-like space without running water, he said. Interpreter Victor Borja also was released.

Israelis, Palestinians put final touches to accord

(Continued from page 1) work," said Nabil Abu Rdaina, a top Arafat adviser. An agreement has been reported imminent on several occasions in recent weeks, but each time problems have arisen, mostly linked to Palestinian fears that once Israel hands over most of Hebron, Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing government will freeze further extensions of self-rule. Differences standing in the way of an agreement on Monday reportedly included Israeli approval for the opening of an airport and seaport in the Gaza Strip, the release of Palestinians in Israeli jails and Israeli demands for the extradition of militants responsible for anti-Israeli attacks. Once an agreement on the package is reached, it will have to be submitted to the Palestinian and Israeli cabinets for approval. Mr. Arafat called a meeting of his cabinet for Monday night to discuss the negotiations. Israeli press reports Monday said as many as 13 of 18 ministers in Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing government could vote against the agreement. "We expect that there will be no problem and that the drafting will conclude soon and we will have an agreement and a basis for a Netanyahu-Arafat summit... very very soon." The emerging deal would constitute the first progress since Mr. Netanyahu, a hardliner who as opposition leader had opposed the Israel-Palestinian peace process, came to power in May elections. It would also help calm Arab-Israeli tensions which were greatly heightened by doubts Mr. Netanyahu was committed to the peace process. The U.S.-brokered talks have been underway since October, when the United States intervened following Israeli-Palestinian clashes in which 79 people were killed. U.S. envoy Ross already left the talks once, two months ago, and returned last week. Early Sunday, Mr. Ross threatened to leave again, but decided to stay after taking part in the King's talks with Mr. Netanyahu.

The 1995 Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) agreement calls for the three withdrawals to be completed by September. Israel, arguing that the security situation has changed, said the end of 1998 was the earliest possible date for the completion of the withdrawals. The Palestinian official said the compromise proposal would require Israel to complete the three stages by mid-1998 — a significant departure from the Palestinians' previous insistence on the original deadline. The showdown over timing reflects manoeuvring by both sides in advance of final negotiations on issues such as the future of Jerusalem, Jewish settlements, Palestinian refugees and borders. Those talks began last May and are expected to resume soon after the Hebron redeployment. Palestinians want to have most of the West Bank under their autonomy government before the final talks resume, believing this will assure the creation of a Palestinian state in those areas. Mr. Netanyahu, who has spent his career trying to prevent a Palestinian state, wants to keep a large part of the West Bank under Israel's control to have a strong bargaining chip in the negotiations on a final agreement. The Hebron pullout itself is far more sensitive than Israel's withdrawals from other West Bank cities because of the presence of 450 Jewish settlers amid its 120,000 Palestinians. Israeli troops will remain in 20 per cent of the city to guard the settlers. On Sunday, the Maariv newspaper published extracts from a draft of the Hebron agreement, confirmed by a source close to the negotiations. The draft specifies that Israeli troops will leave 80 per cent of Hebron within 10 days of the agreement's signing; Palestinian police and the Israeli army will set up 32-member "rapid intervention teams" to deal with riots and the unrest; and a major downtown thoroughfare and a wholesale market which had been closed for security reasons will reopen.

Opposition to Hebron deal grows

(Continued from page 1) minister, Zevulun Hammer, said the party would stay in the government. The NRP has nine seats in Mr. Netanyahu's 66-member coalition. If NRP quits the coalition, it would deprive Mr. Netanyahu of a majority in the 120-member parliament. Other right-wing legislators called for their parties to withdraw from the government as well, and settler council leaders met to consider resigning in protest of the agreement. Outside a Jerusalem hotel, where Palestinian and Israeli negotiators were meeting, a half-dozen protesters held signs reading "a Hebron deal is the end of Zionism."

U.S., EU to offer guarantees

(Continued from page 1) monopolised intense mediation of negotiations for the past three months. Palestinians consider that European nations, especially France, have a more balanced stance in the Middle East peace process. Israel has insisted on edging out the Europeans by maintaining the primacy of Washington's role. News of the European letter of guarantees came after the European Union's Middle East envoy Miguel Angel Moratinos met over the weekend with Mr. Arafat and with Israeli Foreign Ministry Director-General Eitan Ben Tsur. After the meeting with Mr. Arafat on Saturday, Mr. Moratinos' spokesman said that the EU "supports implementation of the accords concluded notably on the Israeli military redeployment in the West Bank."

Washington cautions against over-optimism

(Continued from page 1) him on the status of the dialogue" and get Mr. Mubarak's insights "into the thinking of those who are negotiating," Mr. McCurry said. Egypt has blamed Israel for the tortoise-like pace of the talks, saying Israel had taken rigid positions and had tried to put pressure on the Palestinian negotiators. Mr. McCurry said Mr. Clinton had received regular reports on the talks from Mr. Ross, Deputy National Security Adviser Samuel Berger and others, and had "offered some thoughts" on how to resolve differences that have been stalling an agreement. Syria meanwhile criticised the U.S. position in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, saying it had swapped its role as mediator for that of Israeli "messenger." "The United States is no longer according as much interest in realising Middle East peace," said Al Baath, the country's ruling party newspaper. "When it is a matter of pressuring the Palestinians and

the Arabs, they play their role of full partner, but for Israel, Washington is content to play messenger," the newspaper added. "That explains the failure of the negotiations and the fact that they have not reached an accord," on Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank town of Hebron, Al Baath said. The newspaper said the presence of Mr. Ross in the region over the past three weeks was "an American cover for the Israelis and Ross to support Israeli proposals and present them to the Palestinians as those of the United States." "The Palestinians want to implement the Oslo (autonomy) accords, but the government of (Israeli Prime Minister) Benyamin Netanyahu is using devious and proposing ideas which empty the accords of their contents," it said. Syria is a fierce critic of the autonomy agreement reached between the Palestinians and Israel in September 1993. It accuses the Palestinians of breaking Arab ranks by signing the agreement.

Randa Habib's corner

Temperance should prevail in Ramadan

DON'T YOU love Ramadan? In this holy month, believers purify their souls, renounce violence and get closer to God and to their fellow citizens. In short, they tend to turn pacifists. For this month gives people time for prayer and forgiveness. But unless you are endowed with the virtue of patience, you may end up in a disgruntled mood and endless scuffles with uneasy people during Ramadan. For example, try to follow the procedures of a pending case at a government department. If you wait till noon to make sure that all employees are behind their desks, you will most probably hit another snag. A frowning and a seemingly sleepy clerk will tell you that his working day is almost over so you had better come back the next day. Moreover, someone may suggest that you wait till the end of Ramadan to get your business straightened out. In other instances, you may decide to do some shopping. The moment you enter the supermarket, you would think that the country is in a state of emergency or that an imminent catastrophe is in the offing. One would ask why people tend to stash heaps of foodstuff. Are we heading towards a state of war? The crowds hustle and bustle in a nervous manner, with shopping carriages piled up with food. Nothing seems to be sufficient. With difficulty you manage to get your grocery and try to elbow your way to the cashier. But you realise that a long queue is ahead of you. You face the possibility of waiting in line to pay for one or few items or quite the whole shopping process until better times. If you chose the first option you may finally be able to get out of the supermarket by 4:30 p.m., just enough time to get back home and have liver with the family. But, the day is not over yet. Crazy driving prevails in the nearly empty streets. Cars swerve frantically, drivers flash their cars' lights, signalling that you should drive faster. Some hurried drivers fume at your cool driving and even express their anger by means of hand signs. When moving ahead, you then encounter a motorist who blows his horn ceaselessly, in a show of impatience. So when you reach home, you have this awkward feeling that you may have done something wrong, when all you wanted to do is share with the others the moment of peace, tranquillity and love — three creeds which should prevail in this holy month.

UFO researcher looks everywhere for answers

ALBANY, New York (AP) — Some watch the skies for strange lights and alien ships. Michael Craft has been watching the watchers. His new book, "Alien Impact," tells their wild tales: UFO abductions, subterranean alien bases, mutilated cattle, government conspiracies, crop circles, magic fairies. The book is a primer of UFO tales that asks the age-old question: What are people seeing in the sky? Readers expecting an answer befitting the "X-files" will be disappointed, because Craft doesn't pretend to know. But after years of research and travel, he rounds up some unusual suspects. Yes, he says, there could be alien visitors out there. But he also explores the possibility of prankster spirits, electromagnetic phenomenon, hoaxes and higher consciousness. Mr. Craft wants to put the UFO phenomenon in context by giving a wide sample of claims, and then allowing readers to consider the causes. Sceptics need not pick up the book; Mr. Craft's intention is not to debunk the many theories he presents. "I definitely feel that this is not going away. Every day it's getting bigger," Mr. Craft said in a telephone interview from his home in Ojai, California. "We need to find some way to cope with it, and denial is not an effective way of coping with anything, and blind belief is not effective either." Alien tales have been around as long as recorded history, with ancient cultures referring to heavenly visitors as gods. In medieval times, strange lights in the skies were chalked up to evil spirits. The first mention of the now-common term "flying saucer" dates to a 1947 Associated Press dispatch out of Pendleton, Oregon, about a strange object streaking through the afternoon sky, according to Mr. Craft's research. Since that time there's been an explosion of alleged alien encounters. Mr. Craft is intrigued by their breadth — and their similarities. Time and again alien visitors are described as gray with big eyes. Witnesses often describe strange ammonia smells accompanying the sighting, with a resulting loss of time afterwards. For those witnesses abducted by aliens — and supermarket tabloids attest this happens often — they too report similar experiences: psychic messages and fumbling sorts of bodily examinations, many of which focus on reproductive organs. Sound crazy? Maybe, Mr. Craft says, but he says he can "hear some wild stories — completely unbelievable — And at the same time you hear these commonalities." Mr. Craft, 38, spent years researching his book. But even before that, he had been devouring books on mythology and the paranormal since he was a kid in Baltimore. Years as a Tai Chi instructor and jobs at new age centres such as the Omega Institute have expanded his contact with the paranormal. "The book is a tapestry of Mr. Craft's inner travels along with exhaustive document research and interviews. In "Alien Impact," Mr. Craft explores — small towns in the English countryside, where farmers are mystified by the exacting circular patterns in their grain crops; — a remote Ohio farm, where a family was terrorised by a group of red-eyed, hairy giants; — ancient claims of spirits, fairies and mermaids; — Bolivia, where a farmer claimed he had sex with a barking red-headed alien because the far-flung race needed stock from a "good stallion"; — research that suggests early civilisations were given technical know-how by aliens; — a conference of UFOlogists who reveal details of the government's secret time control experiments and a treaty between President Franklin Roosevelt and the aliens.

Israeli trade deficit reaches \$10.5b in '96

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel's trade deficit widened by 4.3 per cent, or \$430 million, to \$10.5 billion in 1996, the Central Bureau of Statistics said Sunday.

The increase marked a sharp slowing from 1995 when the deficit widened by 38 per cent and 1994 when it widened by 19.5 per cent, the bureau said.

Merchandise imports grew by 5.7 per cent, or \$1.6 billion, to \$29.6 billion, slowing from 20 per cent in 1995 and 16 per cent in 1994. Merchandise exports grew by 6.5 per cent, or \$1.2 billion, to \$19.1 billion. They slowed from a 20 per cent increase in 1995 and a 16 per cent increase in 1994.

Israel ran a big surplus with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in the year as exports rose 1.9 per cent to \$1.55 billion and imports fell 31.9 per cent to \$235 million. Including the \$1.32 billion trade surplus with the PNA, Israel's overall trade deficit fell to \$9.2 billion in 1996, the bureau said.

Last year was the first that the bureau published trade with the West Bank and Gaza under PNA control as part of its international trade figures. Previous figures were based on estimates.

It said that since the first-quarter of 1996, overall merchandise imports, discounting ships, aircraft, diamonds, fuel and trade with the PNA, had fallen an average of 0.6 per cent a month. In 1995, it added, imports had grown by one to two per cent a month.

Merchandise exports grew more slowly than in 1995, averaging an 0.4 per cent increase per month, compared with 0.8 per cent a month in the previous year. Nevertheless, the bureau said Israel's trade deficit had been declining by about 2.4 per cent a month since the end of first-quarter 1996.

Imports of machinery and equipment rose nine per cent in the year, while imports of consumer products rose 11 per cent.

Industrial-export growth slowed to 5.7 per cent last year, from nine per cent in

1995 and 13 per cent in 1994. The bureau said the export categories it defined as high technology grew a faster seven to 16 per cent in 1996, with software exports rising 37 per cent. Exports of wood and paper, mining products, textiles and food declined.

Earlier this month, the Central Bureau of Statistics said Israel's economy grew by a preliminary 4.4 per cent in 1996, considerably faster than forecast, due to stronger-than-expected exports to the West Bank and Gaza.

As recently as October, the bureau was forecasting a 3.9 per cent increase in GDP. Economic growth nevertheless slowed sharply from 1995, when gross domestic product (GDP) expanded by 7.1 per cent.

Faster growth also helped to trim the country's current account deficit from earlier forecasts to \$4.619 billion. However, it was wider than 1995's \$3.874 billion and was equivalent to 4.8 per cent of GDP, the bureau said.

The bureau had been expecting the closures of the West Bank and Gaza, imposed by the Israeli government in the wake of suicide bombings last February and March, would cause exports to the areas to fall. But the bureau said they dropped by less than expected.

Other data from the Central Bureau of Statistics showed that tourism to Israel fell noticeably in 1996, apparently as a result of stalled peace talks and deadly violence in the Jewish state.

The number of visitors through the end of November was 2,178,900, 7.2 per cent lower than during the same period last year, the bureau said. Air arrivals fell 10 per cent.

December tourism figures are not yet available, but hotels and airlines reported a decline during the holiday season, when thousands of pilgrims come to the Holy Land for Christmas.

Saudis to boost spending in '97 to create jobs for nationals

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Saudi Arabia plans a big jump in spending in 1997 thanks to projected higher oil prices and will use the money on job training to wean the country off its dependence on foreign labour, economists have said.

The world's biggest oil producer and exporter boosted projected expenditure by more than \$8 billion in 1997 over the previous year, although higher earnings could have wiped out the deficit, they said.

"We consider the budget of 1997 as a budget of human resources, as nearly 60 per cent of the increase in spending was allocated for education, manpower training and other development sectors," said Anwar Ahmad, vice-president of the Riyadh-based Consultancy Centre for Finance and Investment.

"The kingdom could have eliminated the projected deficit as it forecast higher revenues. But it appears determined to expand the scope of education and training for its nationals to qualify them for jobs," he told AFP.

Saudi Arabia, buoyed by expectations that oil prices will remain relatively strong this year, increased allocations for education

and training for local manpower by more than 50 per cent to 41.6 billion Saudi riyals (\$11 billion) from 27.6 billion riyals (\$7.36 billion) in 1996.

The increase and higher allocations for health and subsidies pushed up overall spending to 181 billion riyals (\$48.2 billion) from a projected \$40 billion in 1996, according to official budget figures.

Saudi Arabia has launched a drive to ensure jobs for the growing number of its citizens as part of attempts to lessen its reliance on foreigners.

The kingdom, which controls more than a quarter of the world's proven oil reserves, has set a target of creating nearly 660,000 jobs for Saudis by the end of the 1995-1999 development plan.

King Fahd and other Saudi government officials have urged the private sector to employ more locals as they have remained a minority in the workforce in that sector.

Independent estimates put the number of foreigners in Saudi Arabia at more than five million and they exceed 90 per cent of the private labour.

In October, Riyadh banned foreigners from 14 job categories and said the

existing work permits for those jobs would not be renewed.

The Saudi finance ministry has not published details of the budget allocations for the education and labour training but economists said they would cover the construction of new schools, training institutes and other literacy centres as well as expansion of existing facilities.

"The Saudi government now realises that job nationalisation is vital for its economy and security. This explains its seriousness in rehabilitating its people to gradually end reliance on foreigners," a Riyadh-based expert said.

"Such policies run parallel with its efforts to put the economy back on track and eliminate the budget deficit. As you see, despite the surge in allocations for those sectors, the deficit was forecast lower this year."

The shortfall was projected at around \$4.5 billion compared with the forecast 1996 deficit of \$4.9 billion, which was slightly trimmed because of a sharp increase in oil prices that year.

Economists and bankers said Riyadh had assumed an oil price of around \$16.5 in its 1997 budget, far higher than the \$14.5 assumed in 1996. But the level is lower than the actual price

average of \$20 in 1996. With the increases in funds for education and other sectors, Saudi Arabia could again overshoot targeted expenditure as it has to pay large sums in arrears to local contractors, according to bankers.

"The arrears to the local contractors were not indicated in the budget but they are no longer a problem for the Saudis. They are being paid in an organised manner every year," one banker said.

"Unless there was no rise in oil prices over the projected level, the deficit will persist or even grow."

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates Prices as at 13/01/97 15:31									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.5857	1.3780	116.45	1.3472	1541.20	1.7803	5.3515		
Deutsche Mark	0.6306	1.0000	0.7363	0.6557	136.63	0.6306	3.3757		
British Pound	1.6736	2.6532	1.0000	0.8466	163.33	0.7936	2.9371		
Swiss Franc	0.7287	1.1519	0.8466	1.0000	136.63	0.6557	1.1519		
Japanese Yen	0.0088	1.3604	0.0153	0.0074	1.0000	0.0074	115.93		
Canadian Dollar	0.7423	1.1768	0.7936	0.6557	136.63	1.0000	1.1519		
Italian Lira	0.0006	1.0277	0.3671	0.0892	1324.68	0.8732	11.54	3.4687	
Dutch Guilder	0.5817	1.0000	0.7363	0.6557	136.63	0.6306	3.3757	1.0000	
French Franc	0.1869	0.2982	0.1115	0.2570	21.74	0.2516	33.26	33.2600	

Energy		
Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	25.05	25.30
WTI	24.10	24.25
Bony	25.05	25.30
Debut	22.46	22.40
UL Gas	211.00	211.00

Mid-East Currencies					
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2667	0.4230	0.19936	0.36718	31.082
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.43187	0.16278	0.3748	31.236
KW Dinar	3.3333	5.2821	1.99203	4.58926	388.5
BF Dinar	0.3770	0.26886	1.56528	3.623	309.216
CV Pound	2.0961	3.3233	1.2516	2.8837	244.131

Metal Prices		
Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz)	359.25	359.75
Silver (oz)	4.75	4.77
Platinum (oz)	363.25	364.25
NIU (3 Months)	1595	1596
CU (3 Months)	2257	2252
Zinc (3 Months)	1086	1087
Lead (3 Months)	692	694
NI (3 Months)	2130	2135

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Cncy	Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	Year	Cncy	Month	3 Months	6 Months
USD	5.46	5.63	5.75	5.71	5.58	USD	5.46	5.63	5.75
GBP	6.14	6.24	6.28	6.28	6.28	GBP	6.14	6.24	6.28
JPY	0.46	0.46	0.50	0.53	0.48	JPY	0.46	0.46	0.50
DEM	2.97	2.97	2.97	2.97	2.97	DEM	2.97	2.97	2.97
FRF	3.22	3.20	3.20	3.20	3.20	FRF	3.22	3.20	3.20
CHF	7.43	7.30	7.30	7.30	7.30	CHF	7.43	7.30	7.30
ITL	7.25	7.05	6.75	6.49	6.38	ITL	7.25	7.05	6.75

Main Equity Indices									
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Ch		
New York	DOW JONES	7036.57	0	0	7036.57	7036.57	7036.57		
London	FT-SE 100	4096.3	39.7	0.98	4098.3	4078.8	4096.3		
Paris	NIKKEI 225	10178.79	112.74	1.1	10178.79	10178.79	10178.79		
Frankfurt	CAC 40	2384.68	37.18	1.6	2370.87	2353.89	2374.5		
	DAX	2953.72	20.33	0.69	2967.25	2931.61	2953.39		

Energy		
Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/ba)	123.67	Spot
Cocoa (c/ba)	1546	Spot
Sugar (c/ba)	308.3	Spot
Wheat (c/ba)	23.08	Spot
Soy (c/ba)	23.08	Spot
Wheat (c/ba)	23.08	Spot
Soy (c/ba)	23.08	Spot
Wheat (c/ba)	23.08	Spot
Soy (c/ba)	23.08	Spot

* JOB Cross Rates		
Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
Deutsche Mark	0.181	0.183
DE Mark	0.446	0.448
CHF Franc	0.3174	0.3174
FR Franc	0.1322	0.1329
JP Yen	0.0081	0.0081
NL Guilder	0.3874	0.3894
IT Lira	0.4579	0.4602

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

China to intensify crackdown on economic disorder

BEIJING (R) — China has vowed to intensify a crackdown on economic disorder in 1997, citing tax evasion, financial irregularities, smuggling and counterfeiting as some ills that cost the state billions of dollars a year.

"Basically, the situation of economic disorder still has not changed. Some problems are even considerably serious," the official People's Daily said in a commentary.

Chinese authorities uncovered tax, auditing and pricing violations valued at 161 billion yuan (\$19.4 billion) in the past 11 years, or an average of 14.6 billion yuan a year, the commentary said.

"Increasing the intensity of regulating and revamping economic order has become an important mission which brooks no delay," the

mouthpiece of the ruling Communist Party said. "We cannot be soft when dealing a blow to various economic crimes," the commentary said.

Tax evasion and smuggling were now rife, springing up along with market-oriented economic reforms introduced by paramount leader Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s.

State media said taxpayers had evaded personal income tax worth an estimated 12 billion yuan since the tax was introduced in 1980.

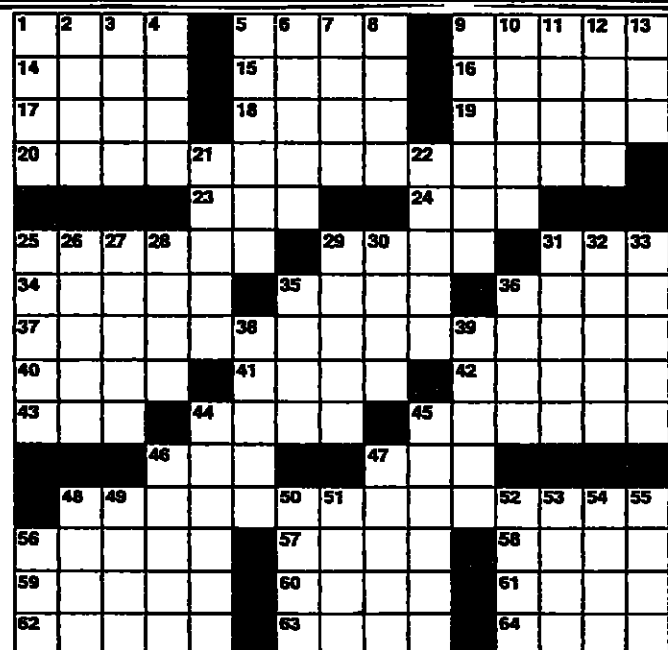
Up to 60 per cent of state-run or collective firms in China evaded taxes, the media said. It gave no figures.

"Many enterprises have two sets of accounting books and fabricate financial statements, budgets, sales and asset appraisal," the commentary said.

Chinese companies owed 35.7 billion yuan in industrial and commercial taxes in the first 11 months of 1996, up 72.9 per cent from the year-ago period, Xinhua News Agency said.

THE Daily Crossword

- ACROSS
- Dunce, briefly
 - Loquacious quadruped?
 - Channing
 - Leg joint
 - Top-drawer
 - Likely story?
 - Farm plot
 - Fountain favorite
 - Well-known
 - Beginning of a statement
 - Call for help
 - Unit
 - Most recent
 - Painting and sculpture
 - de mer
 - Agreeable fragrance
 - Soft cheese
 - Belgian river
 - Continuation of statement
 - Entre — (confidentially)
 - Drying kiln
 - Muslim prince
 - Comp. pt.
 - Comic Johnson
 - Stylish
 - Scores: abbr.
 - Chef's need
 - Conclusion of statement
 - Thicket
 - Winged singer
 - Idiot
 - Accumulate
 - Toward shelter
 - Virginia willow
 - Rent to another
 - Borscht
 - Ingredient
 - Sports group



by Frank R. Jackson

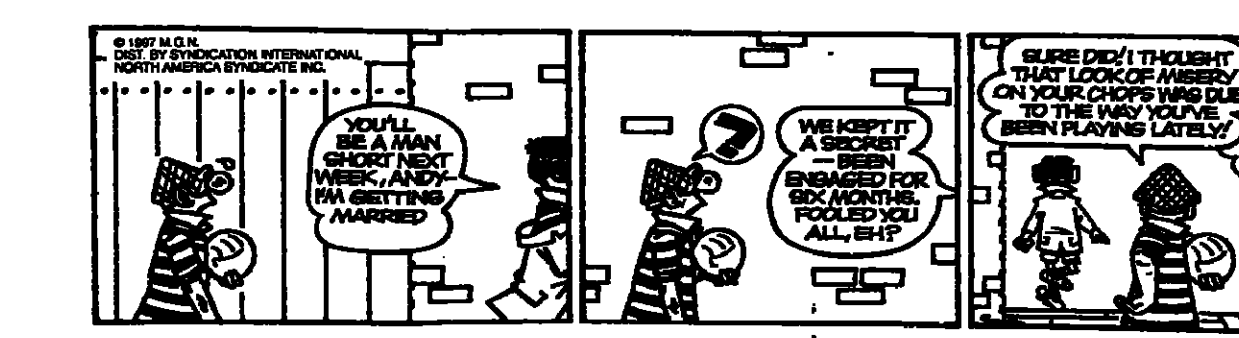
9 Ecclesiastical decrees	ROOM	KITE	CUBS
10 Apart from others	ANGEL	INAM	ATEE
11 Stravinsky's "— of Spring"	TERRA	WITS	MALT
12 Follow orders	RECRUIT	HIT	
13 Cap	HAM	ASS	HAZE
14 Brazilian palm	AREA	PETITIONER	
15 Sacred choral composition	PAWNS	LEMONS	
16 "Mule Train" singer	THEDEAD	MANTLES	
17 Fire crime	IMPEDE	SIEGE	
18 Hat type	POSSESSORS	LOON	
19 Big birds	RULE	ETC	OBI
20 Ascended	ITO	TIBETAN	
21 Schism	SAPS	AZOV	DINAH
22 Particles	OGEE	LORE	SENSE
23 Residue	NEST	BOSS	SEAN
24 Suspicious			
25 Cop's itinerary			
26 "This one's —"			
27 Trunk			
28 Planet			
29 Bear witness to			
30 Court calendar			
31 Hard-riding pursuers			
32 Thick soup			
33 Eternal City			
34 Ring stone			
35 Excessive fat			
36 Masculine			
37 Revise for publication			
38 Cast a ballot			
39 Thought			
40 Rich garden soil			
41 Sedan or roadster			

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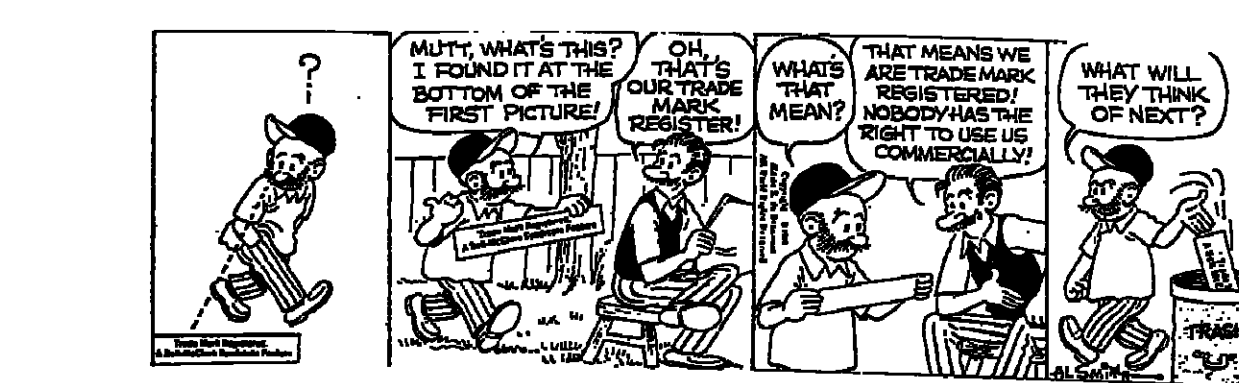
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n' Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Be careful not to lose your temper today or there could be dire consequences. Tonight you can make big headway in your career activities with correct advice from a bigwig. Don't waste any time on trivial matters.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Try not to disagree with one who is contented or you could complicate matters. Get into important matters later this evening and handle them wisely thereby you can develop a course of action which is successful.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You want to give an outsider a piece of your mind today, however, this would only make matters more difficult, so be careful in your choice of action. Later this evening will be good to spend time with your loved ones.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Career activities may not go well today, however, if you keep an even keel you will be able to handle any situation. Attend a social event you have been looking forward to later this evening and you should dress nicely.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Get busy at career affairs today and forego making plans for pleasure at this time. Later this evening take no risks with your health, so make sure you are well protected from adverse weather conditions which could ruin a good time.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Avoid a possible disagreement at home, which could be detrimental to the relationship of your loved ones. Enjoy the company of your friends later this evening and strive for perfection in all of your endeavors.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) If you get an unpleasant message today, don't allow it to bother you or you won't get anything accomplished. Tonight is fine for entertaining practical individuals, so make the best of this situation.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Try not to commit yourself today to anything too risky or expensive otherwise you could regret the outcome. Get busy later this evening and handle your communications with fellow associates, so that you can be successful.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Do not show others you are upset today, otherwise you won't be able to get anything accomplished in your business activities. Later this evening you should keep working on a practical level to gain your success.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Do not concern yourself about what cannot be helped, otherwise you will worry over matters which will be resolved. Busy yourself later this evening with improving personal matters and thereby you will get noticed by a bigwig.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Talk over a difficulty today with the one you love and get the right advice to make everything better. Don't bother later this evening a busy friend, otherwise you won't gain any of his or her assistance in the days ahead.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) A devoted friend can today assist you with something important so that you can complete your business activities. Don't disturb an influential person later this evening, otherwise he or she could be resentful to you at a later time.

Business Bank merger to create

By Ghaila Mul

The merger of the Business Bank and the National Bank of Jordan will create the largest commercial bank in the Kingdom with a capital of JD 42 billion.

The Business Bank General Manager Wafar Al-Haddad said that the two banks have decided to merge in order to meet the Central Bank of Jordan's requirement of a minimum capital of JD 40 billion.

The Business Bank Chairman

Potash company g

JD-45 million

Municipality of Greater

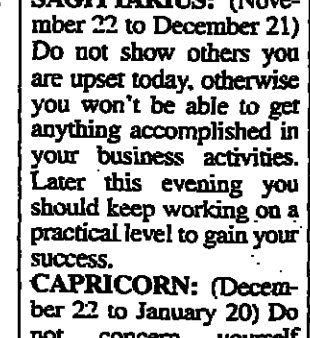
collects JD59.9 million

REVENUES COLLECTED

Greater Amman (MoGA) announced that revenues collected for 1996, estimated at 59.9 million, were less than the 1995 figure of 61.5 million. MoGA attributed the decline in revenue to a 10 per cent drop in the 1996 budget. Another factor for the decline was the 1996 budget, which was 10 per cent lower than the 1995 budget.

According to MoGA records, the 1996 budget was 59.9 million, compared to 61.5 million in 1995. The 1996 budget was 10 per cent lower than the 1995 budget.

THE BETTER HALF



JUMBLE

Unscramble these four jumbles. One letter in each square, to form four ordinary words.

DICAR

TIGAN

GESTAK

SHINIF

Answer here: _____

Yesterday's Jumbles: CABIN, GLOVE, Running in a race up this — BREATH TAKING

Government to sell 26% of JTC equity to 'strategic partner' before end of '97

The new entity, to be known as Jordan National Bank will be the fourth largest bank in Jordan after the Arab Bank, the Housing Bank and the Islamic Bank.

Mr. Saraireh, addressing a weekly press briefing arranged by the Ministry of Information, confirmed that the JTC had accepted an offer from an international consortium to act as finan-

The mandate of the financial advisor is for the sale of a 26 per cent interest in JTC to a strategic global telecommunication partner, and is subject to final confirmation by the government of Jordan." Ali Al-Husary, chairman and chief executive officer of the Export and Finance Bank of Jordan, told the Jordan Times last week.

The JTC has several options under study for further disposal of its equity, including placing it for subscription through the Amman Financial Market

He confirmed that the government had taken a decision to cancel all telephone lines given to senior officials and paid for by the state and reallocate them to those clearly designated by the prime minister. The bills of these lines will continue to be settled by the government.

He also noted that the 1997 budget allocates specific amounts to various ministries and government departments as communication expenses and that these ministries and department would settle their telephone bills as any other JTC subscriber.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET												
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHAMSISAT												
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179												
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 13/01/1997												
FIRST 12 MONTHS HIGH LOW		CORPORATION'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE		
261.000	305.000	ARAB BANK	14.1	1.36	1	100	29700	257.00	257.00	-		
1.230	.880	MID.EAST INV.BK.	72.3	0.00	1	500	850	1.10	1.10	-		
2.700	2.120	INDUSTRIAL DEV.BK.	5.2	6.18	5	1700	36.25	2.26	2.26	-		
2.250	4.250	THE HOUSING BK.	12.5	2.86	2	1100	5126	4.80	4.66	.14		
1.090	.680	JOR.GULF BANK	5.8	7.14	1	1000	980	.98	.98	-		
4.180	3.480	JOR.ISLAMIC BANK	17.7	0.00	1	200	736	3.68	3.68	-		
1.450	1.000	PHILADEL.IBV.BK.	9	0.00	3	500	645	1.28	1.29	.01		
BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 195.49	%CHG: -0.22	16	5142	37709					
2.830	1.830	JOR FRENCH INSUR.	5.4	10.47	5	1350	2609	1.90	1.91	.01		
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 120.38	%CHG: +0.05	5	1350	2609					
1.830	1.450	JOR.ELECTRIC PWR.	11.3	7.35	10	6500	10895	1.63	1.62	-		
9.250	7.800	JOR.ROTEL TOURISM	17.2	2.06	1	4000	4000	9.25	8.00	.25		
1.750	1.080	ENTL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	3	1000	1183	1.18	1.19	.01		
3.720	3.130	ARAB INTL.IV.EDUC.	13.7	5.00	1	500	1730	3.50	3.46	.04		
1.250	.960	SARKA EDUCATION	9	0.00	4	1900	1995	1.05	1.05	-		
2.290	1.690	UNIFIED CO.	11.3	4.67	29	12211	44958	2.10	2.14	.04		
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 111.49	%CHG: -0.09	50	31661	64787					
3.500	2.710	JOR.PHOSPHATE MINES	35.0	0.00	8	1232	4004	3.27	3.25	.02		
6.000	4.950	ARAB POTASH CO.	17.3	3.51	4	3600	20520	5.66	5.70	.04		
10.400	8.720	JOR. PETROL REFINERY	9.9	8.21	7	285	2774	9.72	9.75	.03		
3.710	1.650	INDUSTRIAL COMM.BOR.	32.9	0.00	2	844	242	2.45	2.45	.00		
7.950	6.420	JOR.WORSTED MILLS	8.9	3.60	2	750	5213	6.85	6.95	.10		
4.720	3.040	ARAB PHARM. MANT.	19.2	5.71	9	885	3088	3.60	3.30	-		
2.380	1.570	JOR.RIPPE MANUFACT.	7.5	6.00	6	1449	1440	1.60	1.60	-		
7.450	4.250	DAL ALUMINA DV.IV.	13.3	4.12	4	597	2891	4.85	4.85	-		
5.800	3.130	ARAB ALUM. IND.	8.6	8.62	3	174	605	3.30	3.48	.01		
.960	.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9	0.00	14	14600	8905	1.51	1.51	.00		
1.440	1.060	ARAB PAPER CORP.	24.9	8.97	1	300	249	1.15	1.16	.01		
1.020	.540	NATIONAL INSUR.	10.4	8.23	27	21600	16303	.68	.70	.02		
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 113.68	%CHG: +0.27	124	65538	94059					
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 152.32	%CHG: -0.02	195	104691	199163					
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 13/01/1997												
.800	.500	JOR.TRADE PAC.	14.1	0.00	6	4250	2213	.52	.53	.01		

Australian Open Becker out; Chang, Graf through

MELBOURNE (R) — Defending champion Boris Becker made a shock first round exit from the Australian Open on Monday, beaten by young Spaniard Carlos Moya in one of the biggest upsets in Grand Slam tennis history.

Moya, a clay court specialist ranked 25th in the world, beat the German world No. 6 5-7 6-7 (7-4) 3-6 6-1 6-4 in a match lasting three hours and 31 minutes played on a baking centre court at Melbourne Park.

"My brain is scrambled eggs right now," Becker said. "I'm really struggling to speak because I'm burning."

On a day when other top seeds, among them Steffi Graf and Michael Chang, cruised into the second round, Becker knew he faced a strong first-round opponent.

Moya upset Becker in the Paris Open indoors tournament last October and reached the final of the Sydney International at the weekend, losing to rising British star Tim Henman.

But after a nervous start, Becker appeared to have the match under control as he built up a two sets to one lead.

Moya, 20, replied with a succession of precise passing shots, rapid service returns and winning lobs which won him the next set and left Becker cursing with frustration.

Becker's game was erratic throughout. He served almost as many double faults as aces and failed to show any of his normal mastery at the net.

It is not the first time that Becker has been an early loser in Melbourne. After winning the tournament in 1991, he was knocked out in the third round the following year and in the first round of the 1993 and 1995 tournaments.

The only other Grand Slam men's champion to lose in the first round was American Roscoe



Defending champion Boris Becker of Germany waves goodbye to the centre court crowd after his five set loss to Spain's Carlos Moya at the Australian Open (Reuters photo)

Tanner, who won the Australian Open in January 1977 only to lose on his first outing when it was played again that December.

Becker's defeat came as a blow to tournament organisers, who have already seen a clutch of big-name stars including women's champion Monica Seles withdraw from the tournament. Becker had been seen as the player with the best chance of beating World No. 1 Pete Sampras.

Men's No. 4 Yevgeny Kafelnikov withdrew last week after breaking his hand and local star Mark Philippoussis, who ousted Sampras from the

licated passage to the second round, seeing off Belgian challenger Kris Goossens 6-0 6-3 6-1, although he had to take a break to pass a cold towel to a ball girl who fainted in temperatures of up to 35 degrees Celsius.

Graf also had to get involved in some amateur nursing, when she saw her first round opponent, Slovakia's Janette Husarova, collapse on court with a knee injury 22 minutes into their match with the German leading 5-1.

Husarova was forced to wait several minutes before receiving treatment and top seed Graf, who won the match by default, was forced to step in and take a handful of ice cubes to ease her opponent's pain.

In other first round action on Monday, 15th seed Michael Stich saw off Sweden's Patrik Fredriksson 6-3 6-2 6-2 and women's third seed Conchita Martinez of Spain enjoyed a 6-0 6-2 win over Miriam Oremans of the Netherlands.

The youngest woman in the draw, 15-year-old Russian Anna Kournikova, made an early exit, losing 6-2 6-2 to 12th seed Amanda Coetzer of South Africa.

Sweden's Thomas



Michael Chang of the U.S. serves during his first round match against Belgium's Kris Goossens at the Australian Open at Melbourne Park (Reuters photo)

tournament last year, pulled out on Sunday because of tendinitis. But Becker's absence will give a boost to American World No. 2

Michael Chang, who has not won a Grand Slam since capturing the French Open as a 17-year-old in 1989. Chang had an uncon-

Enqvist, the No. 7 seed, beat Nicolas Pereira of Venezuela 6-1 6-2 6-4 while Thomas Muster of Austria, seeded fifth, enjoyed a straight sets win over Geoff Grant of the United States.

The most closely watched of the unseeded players was rising British star Tim Henman, who won his first tour final on Saturday against Moya. Henman beat Romanian qualifier Andrei Pavel 7-5 6-4 6-2.

While his rivals struggled on a piste hardened by cold temperatures, Sykora mastered the conditions to take victory by a massive 1.66 seconds over compatriot Thomas Stangassinger.

"I'm not getting tired of winning," he said. "Every time is different. I've got no explanation for the form I'm in. It's just great."

Almost effortlessly on a sunny day in Chamonix, the tall, stylish Austrian clocked an aggregate winning time of one minute 56.38 seconds to move closer to final victory in the

Peru overcome Chile in rough World Cup qualifier

LIMA (R) — Peru beat ten-man Chile 2-1 in a rough World Cup qualifying match on Sunday to keep alive their hopes of reaching the 1998 finals in France.

The win sent Peru into seventh-place in the single South American Group. But they are only one point behind third-placed Argentina.

Peru created several early chances and were rewarded when striker Flavio Maestri pounced on a rebound in the 14th minute to head them in front.

Their second goal came in the 34th minute when Chile appeared to be on top, having hit the woodwork with an effort from Sebastian Rozental.

Maestri was again involved, providing the pass from which Roberto Palacios scored with a first time shot.

Chile, who had a player sent off last month as they drew 1-1 away to Argentina, had Fernando Cornejo shown the red card 12 minutes from the end



Flavio Maestri (L) of Peru speaks with Chilean goal keeper Nelson Tapia during the first half of their World Cup. Peru won 2-1 (Reuters photo)

for a foul on Nolberto Solano. Two minutes from time, their top player Ivan Zamorano headed a consolation.

Real held by Extremadura as Atletico crush Zaragoza

MADRID (R) — Real Madrid threw away an opportunity to extend their lead at the top of the Spanish First Division when they were held to a goalless draw at bottom-placed Extremadura on Sunday.

The result leaves Real three points ahead of Barcelona, who need to win their game with Hercules to take over at the top on goal difference. Third-placed Deportivo lost ground by drawing 1-1 at Valladolid but champions Atletico Madrid hit their best form to demolish Zaragoza 5-1.

"The result demonstrates there are no small rivals," said Real president Lorenzo Sanz, whose team travel across the Spanish capital to face neighbours Atletico Madrid next weekend.

Atletico warmed up for the clash with a superb 5-1 win over Zaragoza.

The best game of the day was played at Valladolid, where Deportivo Coruna's Corentin Martins missed a late penalty with the score at 1-1.

Deportivo stay third, five points off the pace, and two points ahead of Real Betis who have a game in hand after the Spanish Football Federation agreed to suspend their fixture at sporting Gijon because of a flu bug which has decimated the southerners' squad. Betis' neighbours Sevilla had new signing Robert Prosinecki to thank for the two goals which beat Oviedo, including a last-minute effort which clinched the match.

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Hardaway, Seikaly lead Magic to rare road win

TORONTO (R) — Penny Hardaway and Rony Seikaly combined for 11 of Orlando's final 13 points as the Magic won for just the fifth time on the road this season, an 88-85 victory over the Toronto Raptors.

Horace Grant scored 22 points, Seikaly had 21 and 17 rebounds and Hardaway added 16 points for the struggling Magic, who are just 5-14 away from home.

Walt Williams led the Raptors with 22 points but was held scoreless in the fourth quarter, while Damon Stoudamire added 19 points and 14 assists for Toronto, which blew a 13-point third-quarter lead.

"We gave them the game," Stoudamire said. "We had our chances and we should have won. It should have been over in the middle of the third quarter."

A pair of Stoudamire free throws with nine seconds left pulled the Raptors within one. But Hardaway answered with two free throws with 7.4 seconds to go.

"If I had shot a little better, we wouldn't have needed to turn it on at the end," Hardaway said. "We've been struggling offensively, but defensively we've been playing well. That's what kept us in the game and gave us a chance to win."

In Milwaukee, rookie Ray Allen scored nine of his 22 points in the third quarter to spark two key Milwaukee runs as the Bucks trounced the Golden State Warriors 111-93.

Vin Baker scored 17 points, grabbed 12 rebounds and blocked four shots and Armon Gilliam had 16 points as all five bucks starters scored in double figures.

With Milwaukee holding a 51-50 third-quarter lead, the Bucks scored 10 of the next 12 points, capped by an Allen three-pointer. The Bucks also had an 8-0 run later in the quarter to push their lead to 17.

Latrell Sprewell scored 21 points and Joe Smith added 18 for the Warriors, losers of four of their last six games.

In Sacramento, Glen Rice scored 26 points and Anthony Mason added 24 points and 11 rebounds to lead the Charlotte Hornets to a 97-93 victory over the Kings.

The Hornets really won the game at the foul line as Sacramento committed 24 fouls, giving the Hornets 30 free throws compared to a franchise-low six for the Kings.

Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf had 22 points and Cortis Williamson added 18 for Sacramento, which was outscored by Charlotte by a whopping 21-5 margin from the foul line.

Unstoppable Sykora wins in style

CHAMONIX, France (R) — Unstoppable Austrian Thomas Sykora was in a class of his own once again as he cruised to his third successive World Cup slalom win on Sunday.

While his rivals struggled on a piste hardened by cold temperatures, Sykora mastered the conditions to take victory by a massive 1.66 seconds over compatriot Thomas Stangassinger.

"I'm not getting tired of winning," he said. "Every time is different. I've got no explanation for the form I'm in. It's just great."

Almost effortlessly on a sunny day in Chamonix, the tall, stylish Austrian clocked an aggregate winning time of one minute 56.38 seconds to move closer to final victory in the

Slalom World Cup.

Most of his winning margin came from the first leg which he won by more than a second from Italian Alberto Tomba, who then dropped out with flu to leave Sykora with a lead of 1.17 seconds to take into the second leg.

Sykora, who has won four of the five slaloms held so far this winter while finishing second in the other, dominates the Slalom the way the great Tomba once did.

Tomba decided after the first leg that he would be better off spending the rest of the day in bed in an attempt to be fit for a giant Slalom on Tuesday in Adelboden, Switzerland.

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Rescued to rou

PHILADELPHIA, Australia (R) — A rescue operation stepped back on Monday as divers searched for the bodies of two missing divers who were rescued from the sea off the coast of Australia for giving them a ride on the Australian navy frigate.

The rescue operation was emotional about the two divers who were rescued and say they were rescued by the ship's crew at a quayside.

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Rescued yachtsmen return to rousing welcome

FREMANTLE, Australia (R) — Rescued solo yachtsmen Tony Bullimore and Thierry Dubois stepped back on dry land to a rapturous welcome on Monday, cheered by thousands of dockside well-wishers as they gave thanks for their lives.

"Thank you Australia for giving me back my life," frostbitten Briton Bullimore said after walking gingerly down the gangplank of the Australian navy frigate HMAS Adelaide.

"I'm slightly emotional about this but I'm going to turn around and say this 'thank you guys'," he said, raising his arms and pointing to the ship's crew at a quayside reception.

A crowd of several thousand turned out on a sunny morning to greet the two solo sailors who capsize in mountainous seas during the Vendee Globe round-the-world race eight days ago.

The crowd waved British and Australian flags, sang Waltzing Matilda, and held up banners saying "welcome home heroes" as the Adelaide made its way into the western Australia port of Fremantle, escorted by a flotilla of small pleasure craft.

Frenchman Dubois also paid tribute to the ship and aircraft crews involved in the rescue of the round-the-world yachtsmen from freezing Antarctic seas last Thursday.

But he denied the two were heroes. "I don't like a lot of the word hero. We are not heroes. I think Australia have a lot of heroes on this ship and in the aircraft that saved us," Dubois said.

Family members were ushered on board the frigate to greet Bullimore and Dubois privately, before they emerged for an official welcome, arm-in-arm and wearing grey naval uniforms with the name tags "hon. 1" and "hon. 2".

The chief of Australia's defence force general John Baker and defence minister Ian MacLachlan lauded the two sailors and their rescuers. "We are amazed by their determination to succeed and their sheer willpower to survive," said Baker.

A smiling Bullimore, his hands and face yellowed by frostbite, was wearing a cap bearing the logo of an Australian TV channel which carried a live broadcast of the arrival.

The survival story of the 56-year-old former royal marine is expected to attract huge commercial interest from newspapers, television and movie studios.

Bullimore was picked up after spending

four days in a dark air pocket in his upturned yacht, battered by freezing seas.

His fate was unknown until he swam out from under his yacht and into the arms of rescuers.

Dubois, 29, was earlier plucked by helicopter from a tiny life-raft dropped by the Australian air force.

However, fears are held for another yachtsman in the race, Canadian Gerry Roufs, who has not been heard from since Tuesday.

A search for Roufs, missing 2,500 miles from land between south America and the New Zealand, was suspended on Sunday.

Canadian authorities plan to use radar satellite photos to try to locate him.

Another race participant, Frenchman Raphael Dinelli, was rescued from his sinking yacht in the frigid seas south of Australia the day after Christmas.

Dubois and Bullimore were swamped after the official reception by more than 150 local and international media before being whisked away to hospital, where doctors said the pair were in "extraordinarily good shape" despite their ordeal.

Bullimore will need treatment in a decompression chamber for frostbite to his hands and feet, but probably would not need to stay in hospital overnight, hospital officials said. He may also need surgery on the tip of a finger severed in a hatch accident.

Bullimore told a news conference he had been looked after like a baby during his time on the navy ship.

"I was getting embarrassed being tucked in at night, 'wanna cuppa tea, mate?', you know and all that, breakfast in the morning — I've never had it so good in all my life," he said.

Asked how close he felt he had come to death, he said: "Just moments maybe, not hours ... The sea conditions were atrocious ... I really thought, 'well I've bought me ticket this time ... I'm not going to come out of this time'," he said.

Dubois, the more reticent of the two, told how he knew he would not be rescued for four days once he had clambered into the lifeboat and had to fight to stay afloat.

The ebullient Bullimore said he was now looking forward to a chat and a meal later in the day with his wife. "Once she's been nice to me, no doubt she'll give me a talking to," he said.

Beckham 'special' sinks Spurs

LONDON (R) — David Beckham added another spectacular goal to his collection as Manchester United beat Tottenham Hotspur 2-1 Sunday to move second in the English Premier League.

London-born Beckham, who trained with Tottenham as a schoolboy, sealed Spurs' F.A. Cup exit at Old Trafford a week ago with a superb free kick and struck again 14 minutes from time from 25 metres to deny the home side a precious point.

Beckham, set to be a crucial member of the England side in this year's World Cup qualifying campaign, had previously had a quiet afternoon in one of United's less impressive performances.

They went ahead in the 23rd minute when Norwegian ole gunner Solskjaer slid the ball home, rough justice on Spurs who saw Steffen Iversen and Andy Sinton hit the united bar in quick succession.

A headed equaliser from Rory Allen in the 44th minute set up a potentially intriguing second-half, but it took Beckham's goal to enliven a game which contained seven bookings.

The midfielder collected the ball just inside the Spurs' half and strode forward before crashing a right-foot shot into the top corner. United now have 41 points, two behind Liverpool with a game in hand.

Patriots reach Super Bowl

FOXBORO, Massachusetts (R) — The New England Patriots finally ended the Cinderella run of the second-year Jacksonville Jaguars, earning a trip to the Super Bowl with a 20-6 victory in the AFC championship game Sunday.

When the vaunted New England offence faltered, the defence and special teams came up with the big plays in what was a very tight game until late in the fourth quarter. "Our defence carried the day and won the ball game for us," said Patriots quarterback Drew Bledsoe.

"Offensively we didn't play very well," the Patriots (13-5) will play the NFC champion Green Bay Packers (15-3) in Super Bowl XXXI January 26 at New Orleans.

Earlier Sunday, the Packers whipped the surprising second-year Carolina Panthers 30-13 at frigid Lambeau Field to earn their first trip to the Super Bowl in 29 years.

New England head coach Bill Parcells, who won two Super Bowls with the New York Giants, is only the second NFL coach ever to take two different teams to the Super Bowl. Don Shula coached the Baltimore Colts and Miami Dolphins in Super Bowls, winning twice with Miami.

"I knew if we played like they have all year they had a chance," said Parcells, in his fourth year as Patriots coach. "We're going to the show."

This will be New England's second trip to the Super Bowl. As a wild-card team 11 years ago the Patriots went to Super Bowl XX, where they were destroyed by the Chicago Bears.

This year the Jaguars were the wild-card team, having sneaked into the playoffs on the final play of the regular season. They went on the sun the Bills in Buffalo and the overwhelmingly favoured



New England Patriots Larry Whigham (25) and Lawyer Milloy (36) celebrate their 20-6 defeat of the Jacksonville Jaguars in the AFC Championship Game as fireworks explode over the stadium in Foxboro, Massachusetts (Reuters photo)

NFL RESULTS

National Football Conference (NFC)

Green Bay Packers 30 Carolina Panthers 13

American Football Conference (AFC)

New England Patriots 20 Jacksonville Jaguars 6

Note: Packers will meet Patriots in Super Bowl XXXI on January 26 in New Orleans.

Broncos in Denver to come within one victory of the Super Bowl.

"I'm very proud of this football team," said Jacksonville coach Tom Coughlin, who was an assistant under Parcells with the Giants.

"It's been a great run, we played well in the play-offs," the Jaguars appeared to be on the verge of sending the game into overtime when they drove 58 yards to the New England 5-yard line late in the fourth quarter needing a touchdown to tie the game. But on 2nd-and-goal from the 5, Jaguars quarterback Mark Brunell was intercepted in the end zone by Patriots safety Willie Clay with 3:43 remaining.

Jacksonville got the ball back again with another shot at tying the game, but

another costly turnover ended their Super Bowl dream. Linebacker Chris Slade punched the ball away from James Stewart after a five-yard run and cornerback Otis Smith grabbed the ball out of mid air and returned the fumble 47 yards for a touchdown with 2:24 left to seal the win.

Special teams set up 10 of New England's points. Jerome Henderson tackled Jacksonville punter Bryan Barker at the Jaguars 4-yard line to set up a one-yard touchdown run by Curtis Martin early in the first quarter.

In the second quarter, Mike Bartrum recovered a fumbled punt return by Chris Hudson at the Jacksonville 20, leading to a 29-yard Adam Vinatieri field

goal with 7:23 left in the half. The field goal came after a power failure at Foxboro Stadium delayed play for 11 minutes. "We hoped we could get an edge on special teams," Parcells said. "We did do that with the early turnovers. It really helped."

Vinatieri added a 20-yard field goal on the final play of the first half to increase New England's lead to 13-3. The Jaguars were held to a pair of Mike Hollis field goals, a 32-yarder in the second quarter and a 28-yarder in the third that made it 13-6.

The first field goal followed an interception thrown by Bledsoe and the second came after linebacker Eddie Robinson recovered a fumble by Bledsoe.

Nagano Olympic course up to scratch but not for fans

HAKUBA, Japan (AFP) — The technically demanding 1998 Winter Olympic cross-country skiing course here got the thumbs-up from World Cup stars at the weekend.

But they wondered where the spectators were.

Some 2,500 spectators each day were confined to space around the main stadium at the start and finish areas but were barred from points along the undulating course.

Racers complained about lonesome runs through the hills, prompting skiing officials to demand expansion of the viewing space which has been limited to minimise the felling of trees for the six meter wide track.

"Competitors will be encouraged when they are roared on by spectators along the way," said Tatsuo Kitamura, cross-country director for the Japanese skiing association.

"Much more than when they run through no-man's land."

He gingerly added that the Nagano Olympic organising committee "should have thought a bit more about service to spectators."

It is common for spectators to line cross-country courses on European tracks.

Kozo Wada, racing director of the Hakuba World Cup event, said he would study ways to increase spectator viewpoints along the course.

But expenditure on such an additional project would likely be rejected by the organisers who have been cutting spending in view of the swelling operational budget for the Nagano games — threatening to top 100 billion Yen (\$910 million).

Another hitch for cross-country events was that spectators in front rows of the main stand could not see races or victory ceremonies as they were located lower than the course.

A 10-minute walk was also required for access from the bus depot and the parking area to the stadium.

Otherwise, the course itself, which was completed in November at a cost of some 5.4 billion Yen (\$49 million) with steep climbs and twisting downhill, was rated as the toughest by many competitors.

With three tracks, ranging from five to 30 kilometres, it features a 573 meter long uphill climb and has a level difference of 60 metres.

World cup leader and four-time Olympic champion Bjorn Daelie of Norway said the course, called "snow harp" for its shape as seen from over-

head, was the most demanding he had ever tried.

"We can think back to the Olympics in 1994 in Lillehammer, Norway, and there the tracks were really, really hard," he said.

"But, I would say these tracks are even more demanding."

Italians dominated the four World Cup events here, with 28 year-old Silvio Fauner winning the men's 10 kilometre classical and 15 kilometre free pursuit. Stefania Belmondo, who celebrated her 28th birthday

Monday, took the women's 5 kilometre classical race and 10 kilometre free pursuit.

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ANNOUNCEMENT NO. (1/97) The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Telecommunications Regulatory Commission

The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) of Jordan announces that it proposes to issue licences to existing and future operators of data communications services on a class licence basis. The licensing regime will apply to operators of frame relay, packet and asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) services, as well as other value-added data services, including computer and data processing, electronic message service, store and forward service, credit card verification service and Internet service. It will not include real time voice services. Data licence agreements will be renewable annually. Licensees that do not own or operate any underlying transmission facilities will be subject to minimal regulation and will pay a normal annual registration fee to the TRC. Those operators that do own or operate transmission facilities will be subject to interconnection obligations normally imposed upon facilities based telecommunications operators.

The TRC issued a Public Notice January 13, 1997 (TRC Notice 1997-1), which begins a formal consultative dialogue between the TRC and interested parties on the approach that should be used to license these new services. A copy of the Notice may be obtained from the TRC.

Comments on the TRC's proposed approach must be received no later than January 30, 1997. The TRC will review the comments and intends to issue the final form of data communications service licence before February 16, 1997.

For a copy of TRC Notice 1997-1, contact:
The Office of the Director General
Telecommunications Regulatory Commission
P.O. Box 850967, Amman 11185, Jordan
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ANNOUNCEMENT NO. (2/97) The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Telecommunications Regulatory Commission

The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) of Jordan announces that it will call for applications for licences for two national operators of trunking services. The new service operators will be chosen through an open, competitive selection process.

The TRC issued a Public Notice January 13, 1997 (TRC Notice 1997-2), which begins a formal consultative dialogue between the TRC and interested parties on the approach that should be used to license the new services. The Notice also describes the commission's preliminary approach to the licensing of the two trunking operators. A copy of the Notice may be obtained from the TRC.

Parties interested in the licences to provide the new trunking service are requested to file expressions of interest and their comments on the TRC's preliminary approach. Comments must be received no later than February 2, 1997. The TRC will review the comments and intends to issue a formal Call for Tenders in early March.

For a copy of TRC Notice 1997-2, contact:
The Office of the Director General
Telecommunications Regulatory Commission
P.O. Box 850967, Amman 11185, Jordan
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KABARITI BRIEF MUBARAK: Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Monday holds talks in Cairo with Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, who paid a brief visit to the Egyptian capital to brief the president on the outcome of His Majesty King Hussein's successful mediation on Sunday between Israel and the Palestinians (see page 1) (AFP photo)

Letter-bombs explode at Al Hayat offices; two wounded

LONDON (R) — Two people were injured on Monday when a letter-bomb exploded at the London office of an Arabic newspaper, police said.

Three more suspect devices were later found at the offices of the Saudi-owned Al Hayat newspaper, an Arabic-language daily, and made safe with controlled explosions.

"There are three other suspected devices, the building is being examined to ensure there are no further explosive devices amongst the mail," said Police Superintendent Dermot Kellegher.

Al Hayat's office in Washington was the target of a letter-bomb blitz in the United States earlier this month.

New York police were called to U.N. headquarters on Monday to defuse a letter-bomb destined for the Al Hayat office there, a U.N. spokesman said.

Spokesman Fred Eckhard told journalists that the letter-bomb was contained in a white envelope the size of a greeting card. He said that a second suspicious package was also being examined.

At least 25 U.N. personnel were evacuated from their offices on the second and third floors of the U.N. building in New York, following detection of the packages in the second-floor mailroom.

The letter-bomb was addressed to Al Hayat which

has an office in the U.N. building.

Mr. Eckhard said the United Nations had received no specific warning, but that Monday's explosion at Al Hayat in London had triggered the extra security measures here.

Based in London and printed simultaneously in several Arab capitals, Al Hayat belongs to retired General Khaled Ben Sultan, who led the Arab forces in the 1991 Gulf war to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation.

He is the son of the Saudi defence minister, Sultan Ben Abdul Aziz.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is conducting an international investigation after eight letter-bombs made to look like Christmas cards were mailed from Egypt to the United States. The bureau warned that there may be more bombs in the mail.

None of the potentially lethal devices exploded. Five were addressed to Al Hayat in Washington — four arrived and one was found in the postal system — and three turned up in the area around Leavenworth federal prison in Kansas.

The FBI has dismissed as "speculative" reports that it is investigating a possible connection between the letter-bombs and the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Centre and

a foiled plot to bomb other New York landmarks.

Media reports in the United States said the letter bombs found there were made of semtex plastic explosive. British police were not immediately able to specify the kind of explosive found in London.

"We can confirm that the explosion was in the offices of Al Hayat," a police spokesman said.

The first letter-bomb exploded in the basement of the building in the Hammersmith area of west London when an employee opened some mail.

Journalists working for Al Hayat were unable to say why the paper had been targeted.

"We feel very disturbed, very worried," said journalist Karaman Karadachi.

Al Hayat installed screening machinery to check mail and put staff on alert after the Washington letter-bombs, staff said.

One of the two men injured in the blast received face and abdominal injuries while the second suffered burst eardrums and shock, police said.

Bomb experts from the police anti-terrorist squad, along with ambulance services and firefighters, were at the scene.

Police said the building was evacuated and surrounding streets were cordoned off.

Syria anxious to retain close ties with Tehran

TEHRAN (AP) — Syria is eager to protect its ties with Iran despite their recent disagreement over a Gulf land dispute, the government said Monday.

The message was contained in a presidential press release distributed by Syrian Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam and Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa ended an official, two-day visit aimed at patching up differences.

The press release said the two visitors carried a message from Syrian President Hafez Al Assad to his Iranian counterpart, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, stressing "the importance of protecting ties with Iran and exchanging viewpoints on bilateral, regional and international issues."

State-run Iranian media have lashed out at Syria, Iran's long-time ally, for what was seen as anti-Iranian stances adopted by Damascus.

Syria and Egypt joined six Gulf states in Cairo, Egypt, last month in calling on Iran to withdraw from three islands — Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs — which are claimed by the United Arab Emirates.

They also criticised Iran for deploying surface-to-surface missiles on the islands.

The Persian language newspaper Abrar said Monday that "now that Mr. Khaddam and his delegation are in Tehran, we expect a complete explanation on the reason behind Syria's anti-Iranian position in Cairo."

It added: "The people of Iran are impatiently waiting for this explanation."

After his meeting with Mr. Rafsanjani, Mr. Khaddam said that Syria wants to collaborate with "brother and friend Iran" on regional affairs, including the Middle East peace process, Lebanon and Iraq.

Syria is the closest Arab ally of Iran, Syria supported Iran in its 1980-88 war against Iraq, which for decades has been a bitter foe of Syria.

"Increased tensions require closer consultations," he said.

Baghdad says U.N. doubts over missiles are dispelled

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Iraq announced Monday it has dug up four missile engines which it had destroyed previously, claiming the discovery had dispelled U.N. suspicions it was hiding banned weapons.

A foreign ministry spokesman said that Iraqi authorities and U.N. inspectors had discovered the "destroyed missile engines in sites where those missiles were destroyed a few years ago."

"These missile engines are the engines about which the special commission (UNSCOM) was talking as concealed missiles," the spokesman said.

UNSCOM, which has had a team in Iraq for the last week to supervise the excavation of missile sites, suspects Iraq is hiding between six and 16 Scud missiles like those fired on Saudi Arabia and Israel during the 1991 Gulf war.

There was no immediate comment from the officials of UNSCOM, who had expressed suspicion that previous unearthed engines were local products substituted for still-missing imported engines.

Iraqi bulldozers began digging at the site last Tuesday to recover what Iraq said were banned missile components destroyed and buried.

The excavations are continuing, the spokesman added. "This discovery confirms the credibility of what Iraq has always declared that the destruction process of the missiles was comprehensive," he said.

"The allegations on hiding a number of missiles are baseless and are merely intelligence games or assumptions by some people working in the special commission," he added. "The discovery will be an important factor of closing the weapons files which unjustifiably took (a) very long time," he said.

Under U.N. resolutions ending the 1991 war to free Kuwait, Iraq must satisfy UNSCOM it has dismantled its programmes for weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles before the oil embargo can be lifted.

Missiles with a range of 150 kilometres or more are banned.

Oil and trade sanctions were imposed on Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in August 1990. Baghdad resumed limited oil exports last month under an "oil-for-food" deal with the United Nations.

Dissidents say regime killed advisor

Leader of the Iraqi opposition in exile accused President Saddam Hussein on Monday of ordering the assassination of one of his own advisers, Abdullah Fadil Abbas Al Samarra'i.

State Baghdad Radio said Sunday that the adviser died Saturday night in a "regrettable incident," but gave no other details.

But opposition leader Wafiq Al Samarra'i said in Damascus on Monday that the killing was part of reprisals by the Iraqi government against the Samarra'i tribe after an attempt last month on the life of President Saddam's eldest son, Uday.

Uday later suggested that Iran, Iraq's adversary in an eight-year war in the 1980s, was behind the attempt.

Mr. Samarra'i, a former chief of the Iraqi army intelligence who defected to Syria more than two years ago, also claimed in a statement that about 600 Samarra'i tribesmen and army officers have been arrested.

Abdullah Fadil Abbas Al Samarra'i belonged to the same Samarra'i tribe of Wafiq Samarra'i in central Iraq.

Samarra'i, the adviser who died Saturday, was a senior member of the ruling Baath Party in the late 1980s.

He was minister of religious affairs and endowment until September 1993, when he was sacked and named as a presidential adviser, a ceremonial post often given to senior government officials no longer wanted by President Saddam in executive jobs.

"The assassination of Abdullah Fadil has proved Saddam's desire to take revenge and use bloody violence," said Mr. Samarra'i of the Iraqi opposition.

Many Samarra'i tribesmen are known to have been executed, imprisoned or sacked from their jobs for their suspected disloyalty to President Saddam over the past two decades.

In the early 1970s, a senior politician and a member of the tribe — the Baath Party's former chief ideologist Abdul Khaleq Al Samarra'i — was President Saddam's main rival in his efforts to take control of the party.

After President Saddam became president in 1979, Abdul Khaleq Al Samarra'i was executed together with scores of other Baath members opposed to the Iraqi leader.

GCC's four-country panel fails to reconcile Bahrain and Qatar

DUBAI (Agencies) — Four Gulf Arab states mediating between Qatar and Bahrain have failed to ease the two neighbours' bitter territorial dispute, diplomats said on Monday.

A mediation committee headed by Saudi Arabia and including the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Oman met in Riyadh on Sunday amid predictions the two countries would sign a memorandum of understanding.

But Bahrain's official Gulf News Agency (GNA) said the mediation committee would visit Qatar and Bahrain soon to continue its efforts.

The foreign ministers of Bahrain and Qatar had been expected to sign a seven-point document drafted by Saudi Arabia, the dominant powerbroker in the Gulf, to end a war of words over ownership of several small Gulf islands, a Gulf diplomatic source said.

The GNA said Manama had welcomed the memorandum but added Qatar submitted a new proposal to the mediation committee on Sunday. It did not provide details.

Qatar took the territorial dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at the

Hague in 1991, a move opposed by Bahrain.

Ties were further strained after Bahrain last month accused two Qataris of spying — which Qatar denied — and boycotted the Gulf Cooperation Council's December summit in Doha.

Bahrain pardoned the two Qataris.

The GNA said Monday "Manama welcomed a draft agreement" presented by Saudi Arabia, but "Qatar submitted another document on Sunday to the committee" of the four Gulf countries investigating the dispute.

Qatar submitted a memorandum in response to the Saudi call for the two neighbours to halt a hostile media campaign against each other, a Gulf official said.

But the meeting broke up without any agreement, the official said. A full meeting of the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members was not possible because of the differences.

Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Ben Jassem Al Thani told the official Qatari News Agency (QNA) that the document it was asked to sign went beyond steps to defuse the dispute and focused on the

Kurdish rivals to resume talks

ANKARA (AFP) — Two rival Kurdish groups in northern Iraq will begin a third round of peace talks here Tuesday under the auspices of the United States and Turkey, the Foreign Ministry announced Monday.

"Consolidation of the ceasefire and finalisation of a line of demarcation will be the main points at the third round of talks," ministry spokesman Omer Akbel told reporters.

He said Jalal Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), was expected here Tuesday for talks with U.S. and Turkish officials.

But Massoud Barzani, leader of the rival Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), also invited to the Turkish capital, had sent no reply.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Robert Pelletreau, who attended two previous rounds of Kurdish peace talks here, was also expected to arrive in the Turkish capital later on Monday.

"We will try to go forward with the peace process. Even the fact that the violence has been stopped (in northern Iraq) is an achievement," Faki Newyri, a KDP official based here, told AFP.

"However, the continuing lack of confidence between the two sides is a problem," he said.

Mr. Newyri said he did not know whether or not Mr. Barzani would come to the Turkish capital.

Shazad Saib, the PUK's Ankara representative, said: "We will seek to implement the ceasefire agreement at the third round of talks."

Mr. Akbel said there were still some differences between the two Kurdish groups regarding the line of demarcation.

Fighting flared in northern Iraq in late August as KDP forces, supported by Baghdad's troops, attacked the PUK and gained control of the Kurdish "capital" of Erbil.

The two parties declared a ceasefire on Oct. 23 under U.S. pressure. Under an agreement between the KDP and the PUK, they have been working on the ground to determine a line of ceasefire since early December.

COLUMBIA

Newshounds adopt 'Cepa' the dog

LIMA (R) — The world's media camped out at the Lima hostage siege have adopted as a mascot a stray dog whose aversion to Peruvian police has earned him the nickname "Cepa" after the rebel leader. He only has to see a policeman go by (and) his hair stands on end and he starts barking madly," said Claudia Daut, a Reuters photographer. And like his namesake — Nestor Cerpa Cartolini — the irascible dog is media-friendly. Feeding the mutt's taste for take-out pizza has secured the dog's loyalty to the journalists, who fuss over the black and white stray as he eats, drinks and sleeps alongside them at their stakeout, Daut added.

Identical twin study links smoking with wrinkles

LONDON (R) — British doctors studying identical twins have shown that smoking can cause wrinkles and make people look older than they are, the Times said. Using a new ultrasound technique to measure inner arm skin thickness, doctors at St. Thomas' Hospital in London, who did research into disease and genetics on 25 pairs of identical twins, found that the skin of the twin who smoked was on average a quarter thinner than the twin who did not. "Smoking can affect the blood supply to the top layer of skin and that would damage it," Dr. Veronique Bataille, a dermatologist involved in the study, told the newspaper.

"Another way is that a chemical released in the skin after you smoke can break down collagen and elastic tissue," she added.

Houston moves to rein in topless nightclubs

HOUSTON (R) — Topless dancers are up in arms over plans to close topless clubs in Houston that would strip dancers of jobs. The palatial topless clubs, a trademark of the Texan city's nightlife, feature valet parking, marble floors and overstuffed chairs and are part of a \$4 billion a year U.S. topless industry. But the Houston city council is set to vote on Wednesday on measures that would force the clubs out of neighbourhoods, subject dancers to criminal background checks and ban "lap dances" where women perform private dances at close range for big tips. One proposed rule would keep club patrons at least one metre away from the entertainers.

'Independence Day' top movie in People's Choice awards

SANTA MONICA, California (R) — "Independence Day" won best film and Mel Gibson was named best actor in the 23rd annual People's Choice awards, a fans' popularity contest for film, television and music.

Sandra Bullock was named best movie actress, and "Seinfeld" and "ER" were best television shows, all for the second straight year. Bill Cosby and Michael Fox tied for favourite performer in a new television series. The awards were chosen by a telephone poll of Americans aged 18 and above. Addressing the televised ceremony, George Gallup Jr., co-founder of the Gallup Organization, which conducted the poll, did not give an exact number of people surveyed, but said his group called more than 100 million Americans.

Cyprus plays down missile crisis as U.S. mediator launches effort

NICOSIA (Agencies) — The Cypriot government allayed fears on Monday of imminent conflict with Turkey but said it would proceed with a controversial missile deployment in 16 months unless there was a diplomatic solution to the future of the divided island.

"What is needed right now is the concentration on efforts for a political solution to the Cyprus problem," Nicosia's spokesman Yiannakis Cassoulides said after a U.S. envoy met Cypriot President Glafos Clerides.

Mr. Cassoulides said 16 months was ample time before the arrival of the anti-aircraft missiles — vehemently opposed by Turkey — for a diplomatic solution to the 23-year-old problem of Turkey occupying the northern third of the island.

However, he added: "These missiles, unless there is a decision in the meantime for a solution of the Cyprus problem or a decision for the demilitarisation (of Cyprus), will come and be installed."

Turkey threatened military action several times last week to stop deployment of the S-300 anti-aircraft missiles, which the Cypriot government announced last week it would buy from Russia.

U.S. State Department official Corey Cavanaugh said he had not asked Mr. Clerides during their one-hour meet-

ing to cancel the purchase, which was criticised by Washington.

"What he (Clerides) did do though, and I find this very helpful, is he gave us assurances that he is not a single component of those missile systems will be brought to this island in the next 16 months," said Mr. Cavanaugh, who arrived on Sunday on a mission to calm the furor.

"I believe this should effectively defuse this as a crisis issue for Cyprus. People should not now be talking of concerns of conflict because that is not a problem of today," the U.S. official said.

Mr. Cavanaugh was critical on arrival of both the Cypriot decision to purchase the 150-kilometre-range missiles and Turkey's threatening response.

Mr. Cavanaugh was due to travel north later in the day across the ceasefire line dividing the island for talks with Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denkash.

Mr. Cavanaugh was to cross the U.N. buffer zone later Monday to confer with Mr. Denkash — Turkey's armed forces chief-of-staff arrived in breakaway northern Cyprus on Monday in a show of solidarity with the Turkish Cypriots amid the missile crisis with the Greek Cypriots.

"No one can expect us to

stay silent in the face of the Greek-Cypriot move" to buy Russian missiles, General Ismail Hakki Karadayi said on arrival, quoted by the Turkish-Cypriot news agency TAK.

"The Turkish presence in Cyprus will live forever under the guarantee of the Turkish armed forces," Gen. Karadayi said.

The general was received at Ercan airport near Nicosia by Mr. Denkash, leader of the breakaway Turkish-Cypriot state which is recognised only by Ankara.

Gen. Karadayi accused Greece and the Greek Cypriots of "uniting against Turkey in hostile actions" and said "recent Greek-Cypriot initiatives for arming defy peace efforts."

"It seems they have not drawn their lesson from history," he said.

In Ankara, Foreign Ministry spokesman Omer Akbel told reporters that top-level visits would continue between Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots in the coming days.

"President Denkash and (Turkish) Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller will visit Turkey and Cyprus respectively very soon," Mr. Akbel said. The dates have yet to be set.

"Increased tensions require closer consultations," he said.

Paris: Iraq must respect

PARIS (AP) — French Foreign Minister Jean-Marie Godeau on Tuesday called on Iraq to respect U.N. resolutions, notably the lifting of the six-year-old oil embargo. He said Iraq must also respect the special U.N. commission (UNSCOM) with the special U.N. inspectors. He said Iraq must also respect the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the International Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (ICLCS). He said Iraq must also respect the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Religious Discrimination (ICERD).

U.S.: C before Arafat, Ne

Combined agency dispatches

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Israel exp help Syria

TEL AVIV (AP) — If the political stalemate between Israel and Syria persists, Syria could attack Israel and Egypt might try to help Syria, the head of a leading Israeli think-tank said Tuesday.

Zeev Maoz, director of the Latham Centre for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University, told reporters there was a "clear and present danger of a military confrontation involving Syria."

He said Syria, believing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is backing away from pledges by the previous government to negotiate a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights, may feel "cheated" and reassess its commitment to the peace process.

Syria might risk Israeli military action if it believed such action would return negotiations on the Golan Heights, Maoz said. Talks with Syria have been stalled for almost a year.

Another factor that could encourage Syria to act, Maoz said, would be a perception that by the year 2000 Israel will have an anti-missile capability that would reduce the potency of Syria's best offensive weapon — the surface-to-surface missile.

This, he said, "would open a window of strategic instability" that would tempt Syria to act sooner rather than later.

Mr. Maoz said Egypt would face a difficult choice if war broke out between Israel and Syria: whether to act in defence of another Arab state or to